Power and Relational Dynamics in Participation: Children and Young People's Opportunities and Choices in Decision-making in Bangladesh

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Authorship Declaration

I hereby certify that this thesis is my own original work except where otherwise cited with due acknowledgement. The data used in this thesis were collected during my field research in Bangladesh in 2007 to 2008, as a PhD research scholar at the Crawford School of Public Policy, The Australian National University.

Signed---Monira Ahsan---Date---30.09.2014

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Abstract

This thesis explores structures and processes that influence children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices that children and young people make regarding their participation in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. An examination of children and young people's relationships with their families, society and the state is used to critique the liberal construction of the individual rights-bearing child. The experiences and perspectives of young people and adults in this study reveal the relational nature of children and young people's opportunities and choices to participate in decision-making, which is both social and political in nature.

The analysis shows that at the micro level, the social values of duty, obligation, reciprocity, interdependence, deference, honour and shame in generational relationships contribute to developing children and young people's relational identity. Children and young people's engagement with social values reveals the power of moral economy in regulating their agency and shaping their experiences of participation in decision-making in relational contexts.

The study demonstrates that children and young people's adherence to social norms and institutions shape their behavioural disposition and constrain their choices to participate in making decisions. In this process, generation and gender are revealed as the two key structuring factors of social, economic and political life which are further intersected by other social differentiations resulting in children and young people's social exclusion from influencing decisions. Understanding the cultural politics of childhood is thus crucial in understanding opportunities and choices of children and young people's participation in making decisions within various intergenerational and intra-generational social positions.

Equally important is the analysis that reveals children and young people's real vulnerability to danger and risks that exist in the external environment in which they live. Therefore, concerns for children's protection from external vulnerabilities also cause their social exclusion and limit their agency in decision-making.

At the macro level, the analysis reveals that a lack of political commitment to translate policy into practice is linked to normative and ideological views of childhood and

inadequate institutional processes resulting in children and young people's systemic social, political and structural exclusion from influencing public and development policies and services. Moreover, children and young people's agency to influence policy decisions and service provisions are also shaped by powerful broader macro and structural forces such as neoliberal educational policy agenda. The analysis in this thesis thus underscores the power and relational dynamics present in children and young people's opportunities and choices in decision-making that affect their lives.

This thesis therefore argues for considering sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts as spaces in which children and young people's participation in decision-making is embedded in various intergenerational and intra-generational relationships. These relationships as spaces are imbued with multiple dimensions of power and social control. A relational understanding of rights that considers the importance of rights at the macro level to hold the government accountable to realise social and economic rights and relationships at the micro level is therefore significant in taking children and young people's participation in decision-making forward.

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List of Abbreviations

BCA	Bangladesh Children's Academy
BSA	Bangladesh *Shishu* Academy
CARD	Child Access to Rights through Development
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CRP	Community Resource Person
DCA	Directorate of Children's Affairs
FGDs	Focus-Group Discussions
HDI	Human Development Index
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organisations
MOWCA	Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs
MOSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NCP	National Children's Parliament
NCTF	National Children's Task Force
NPA	National Plan of Action for Children
NPA-SAECT	National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VIPP	Visualisation in Participatory Programmes

Glossary

Bachal	Talkative
Beyadop	Discourteous
Bhaiya	Brother
Balok/balika or *kishor/kishori*	adolescent boys/girls
Bojha	Liability
Bongsher alo/batti/uttaradhikar	Lineage of family
Borolok	Rich people
Chukri	Female child sex worker as bonded labour
Hadiah Sharif	Islamic religious discourse by Muhammad
Izzat	Purity
Jhamela/bojha	Liability/Burden
Kharap meya	Spoiled/Polluted girl
Lengty	Small piece of cloth to cover only the genital area
Madrasha	Islamic religious educational institution
Man-izzat	Honour-reputation
Man-shomman/laz-lozza nai	Lacking honour and shame
Mastans	Extortionist groups
Poriber	Family
Purdah	System of seclusion of Muslim women from men
Qur'an	Islamic Sacred Book
Shari'a	The Muslim legal tradition as a basis of law in Muslim state
Shishu	Child
Shishukal	Childhood
Somaj	Local community
Union Parishad	Second lowest administrative tier of the local Administration
Ugro	Too confident
Vhalo meya	Good/Moral girl

Chapter 1 Introduction: power and relational dynamics in children and young people's participation in decision-making

Background

This thesis examines processes and structures that constrain and/ or enable children and young people's participation in decision-making that affect their lives. It explores various sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh. I demonstrate how children and young people's opportunities for influencing decision-making are structured by powerful relational processes and are subject to broader sociocultural and politicoeconomic influences. By taking a relational approach, I therefore examine children and young people's social, material, spatial and political relationships with their families, society and the state and their experiences of multiple exclusion (Redmond, 2009) from influencing decisions. A relational framework to participation takes an interdependent and generational approach, and emphasises diverse forms of participation (2007; Alanen, 2009; Mayall, 2009, 2012; Wyness, 2012; 2013: 341).

Therefore, this thesis is part of the increasingly sophisticated literature on the relational nature of children and young people's participation in decision-making, which recognises that children and young people are part of powerful intergenerational and intra-generational relations (Bessell, 2010: 206-207; Jamieson and Milne, 2012: 265; Konstantoni, 2012; Moore and Mitchell, 2012: 197; Payne, 2012; Plows, 2012; Punch and Tisdall, 2012: 244-245; van Blerk, 2012: 321; Abebe, 2013: 75-77; Bacon and Frankel, 2014; Vergara et al., 2014: 81). I conceptualise such relationships as context for children and young people's participation in decision-making (see also, Moss and Petrie, 2002; Kucznyski, 2003: 7-8; Mannion, 2007; Wyness, 2009a; Shier, 2010; Punch and Tisdall, 2012: 244; Clark, 2013; Wyness, 2013: 349; Shier et al., 2014; Westwood et al., 2014). I demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of such relational contexts and suggest that we need to critically analyse power and social control, which shape children and young people's agency and experiences of participation in decision-making. According to Redmond (2009: 544), '[a]gency can be broadly defined as the capacity to act'.

Therefore, it is necessary to carry out ongoing political analysis of how participation structures and spaces are presented and how power operates in any context in order to understand the way control and competence are negotiated in various relationships (Brooker, 2011: 140; Thomas, 2012a: 7; Bath, 2013: 362; Cockburn, 2013: 217-218; Bacon and Frankel, 2014; Shier et al., 2014). Power appears as a structural constraint in children and young people's participation within various social positions such as parent-child, teacher-student relations, children-policy planners or even between peers. I conclude by arguing that the power and relational dynamics present in various intergenerational and intra-generational relationships and in the wider macro forces influence children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in making decisions.

In this thesis I use Bessell's (2011b: 497) three-dimensional definition of participation in which '(i) a child or young person has sufficient and appropriate information to be able to take part in the decision-making process; (ii) a child or young person has the opportunity to express their views freely; and (iii) the child or young person's views affect the decision.' Following this definition, in order to investigate whether children and young people freely participate in decisions in Bangladesh, we first need to identify how childhood and child are conceptualised in Bangladesh.

In practice in Bangladesh, there is no homogeneous concept of childhood *(shishukal)* as the very idea of childhood varies significantly across generation, gender, social class, ethnicity, caste, birth identity and other social differentiations. The idea of *shishukal* is considered to be a stage of non-reason corresponding to infancy and pre-school childhood; it is gender-neutral and includes children from birth to maximum five years (Aziz and Maloney, 1985; Blanchet, 1996: 38). However, childhood is also considered to continue up to the age of 12, if children live in privileged conditions and are considered to be innocent, well provided and cared-for, and not burdened with any sort of responsibilities.

Thus, Bangladeshi children's experiences of a gender-neutral childhood last only for the pre-pubescent period. As they approach puberty, the gender distinction in adolescence can be observed in the gender segregated terms *balok/balika* or *kishor/kishori* (adolescent boys/girls) reflect the increasingly gender-specific identities and roles for girls and boys. Therefore, apart from age and socioeconomic condition, children and young people's

particular gender identities and roles also shape the construction of childhood and thereby differentiate girls' and boys' opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives in Bangladesh.

Likewise, an absence of a unified definition of a child in various laws and policies in Bangladesh obscures the idea of who *is* a child and who is *not* a child, which constrains children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making in various institutional contexts. There is no uniform definition of a 'child' in the laws and policies of Bangladesh. As a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children are officially recognised as being below the age of 18 years. For instance, the National Children Policy (2011) defines children as all individuals under the age of 18 and adolescents as all individuals between aged 14 and 18 (GOB, 2011: 3).

However, the definition of a child varies between policies (Islam, 2012). Such anomalies in the very concept of a child generate policy rhetoric in realising children and young people's right to participate in decision-making that affect their lives. For the purpose of this study, children and young people are defined as being below the age of 18 years.

The rationale behind undertaking this study lies in the gaps between policy rhetoric and actual practice. Bangladesh is known to be the 'home' of children and young people's participation in decision-making among aid agencies promoting children and young people's rights in Bangladesh. Bangladesh ratified the UNCRC in September 1990. Due to donor pressure and active donor support, the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making has been integrated into the country's mainstream policy frameworks. These include the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2005), which recognises children and young people's participation in decision-making, the National Plan of Action for Children (2005–2010), the National Education Policy (2010), the National Children Policy (2011) and the Children Act (2013).

Nevertheless, none of the policies has ever been implemented. The claims of the donor agencies active in child rights and development in Bangladesh fail to take into account the culture, values, and relationships as well as broader macro forces such as the neoliberal policy agendas that shape children and young people's agency, and influence their opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in making decisions.

However, Bangladesh is far from alone in developing policies on children and young people's participation that have never been implemented. There have been growing concerns that governments adopting the UNCRC but not implementing the policies regarding children and young people's participation (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010: 345). For instance, in the contexts of Africa and Bangladesh, researchers critique that there have been considerable progress in developing policies and instruments concerning children and young people's rights without any significant achievements in terms of implementing those policies (Pillay, 2014; Reinbold, 2014: 225).

In Bangladesh, recently there have been a few studies conducted with children and young people such as on domestic work and education (Jensen, 2007); children and young people's choices in child labour migration (Heissler, 2009); childhood in rural Bangladesh (Mariam, 2009); and experiences in residential childcare (Islam, 2012). Among these studies, Heissler (2009) explores the influence of intra- and extra-household relations on children and young people's choices in child labour migration, while other studies also point to the relational dynamics in children and young people's lives. Nevertheless, there is no study in Bangladesh that systematically examines children and young people's participation in decision-making from the dimensions of sociocultural as well as politicoeconomic relations within various child-adult as well as child-child social positions and within the structures and spaces of families, schools, community and politics.

I therefore seek to examine the individual and social processes that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in Bangladesh. I explore children and young people's opportunities, choice and power by investigating children and young people's engagement with the processes of morality or moral values that underlie their behavioural practices in their daily life. The concept of morality is understood in this thesis in a broad sense. Therefore the aim is to examine different aspects of children and young people's social interactions and relationships and how children and young people make the assessment of what is socially right and wrong (Bacon and Frankel, 2014). In doing so, I apply the idea of relational processes because it suggests the importance of focusing on internal relations, the interactive practices, that underlie the quality of relationships (Connell, 1987: 54-61; Alanen, 2001: 20; Mayall and Zeiher, 2003: 12; Alanen, 2009: 169; Jamieson and Milne, 2012: 266; Mayall, 2012: 350).

By taking a generational social order between children, young people and adults, I explore children and young people's engagement with the social processes of morality within various child-adult social positions and between peers. I deconstruct the institutional contexts of families, schools, community and the government to analyse the sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes of Bangladesh. I demonstrate that the power of social structures and broader macro forces impacts on how children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making are constrained within various institutional contexts.

In this thesis, I consider institutional contexts as spaces for intergenerational and intra-generational relationships. Within such spaces, children and young people's opportunities to participate in making decisions are influenced by highly structured environments characterised by endorsed behaviour that offers little opportunity for self-expression. Therefore, it is important to understand how structures influence children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decisions. Structures are understood in this thesis as patterns of social behaviour that offer a framework of social relations and interaction (Bacon and Frankel, 2014).

I show that different institutions and contexts offer different opportunities and constraints. By analysing children and young people's relationships to structures within which they are embedded, I demonstrate that the tightly structured nature of social groups such as those based on generation, gender, class, ethnicity, caste, social location, birth identity, different ability including other social diversifications regulate inclusion of children and young people in decision-making.

I argue that hierarchies and boundaries (James and Prout, 1995) offer different opportunities and constraints for children and young people's participation in making decisions. In this, I identify the powerful relational processes of children and young people's engagement with the key values of security, tradition, conformity and power. These values are embodied through children and young people's observance of local norms and institutions of duty, obligation, reciprocity and interdependence on the one hand and deference and honour and shame on the other.

I undertook a rights-based and children and young people-centred research design and a participatory approach to conduct this study. I applied mostly qualitative and some

quantitative methods to investigate views and experiences of children, young people and adults. Annexes one to eight in this thesis include qualitative and quantitative research questions and interview guides that I used in my data collection. I carried out field work in one district and at the national level in Bangladesh with around 607 participants including 354 young people (158 girls and 196 boys) aged 12 to 17 years and 253 adults, over nine months between July 2007 and March 2008.

Thesis outline

This thesis comprises nine chapters. In Chapter Two I present the predominant assumptions of the individual rights-bearing child in the literature that underpin the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making and argue that they ignore the importance of considering children and young people's social and political relations. I outline the key debates regarding the export of modern childhood to developing nations through the UNCRC and the relevance of the UNCRC to the Global South. I then explore the prevailing theories, concepts and models, and evaluate the key debates of children and young people's participation in decision-making. In line with the emerging childhood literature, I demonstrate the significance of contexts in which children and young people's participation in decision-making is embedded. To support my argument I introduce the key values of security, tradition, conformity and power with which I will engage and the way they are played out in my data through children and young people's embodied practices of duty, obligation, reciprocity and interdependence, deference to adult authority and control, and honour and shame.

Therefore, in order to examine children and young people's embeddedness in relational contexts, in this chapter I draw on the concept of 'social relations approach' as an analytical framework for this study. I demonstrate that deconstructing various institutional practices through the characteristics of various formal and informal rules, activities, resources, people, and power is useful for this thesis to examine both intergenerational and intra-generational relationships at family, school, community and government levels.

The objective of using the social relations as analytical concept is therefore to understand the processes through which biological difference between generations can turn into social inequalities in terms of children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making. This biological difference is further intersected by other structural

factors including gender, class, ethnicity, caste, different abilities, geographical location, and social identities which I also address in the thesis.

Chapter Three focuses on methodology and methods. I explain the rationale for taking up a rights-based, children and young people-centred research approach and various participatory methods including qualitative and some quantitative instruments. I particularly discuss the importance of multiple methods, and the implications of the ethical issues around voluntary participation, confidentiality and power. My experiences reveal the challenges of applying a rights-based research approach into practice and underscore the importance of considering the contexts and culture in which research takes place with children and young people.

In Chapter Four, I set the Bangladesh context in which my research takes place. Drawing on literature and interweaving with my data, I delineate the country's sociocultural and economic contexts that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making. I analyse assumptions, values and beliefs about the idea of childhood in Bangladesh. I show that generation and gender are key characteristics which intersect with other structures of society such as class, ethnicity, caste, different ability, birth and social identity, and geographical location in constructing particular childhood experiences in Bangladesh. I demonstrate that due to intergenerational interdependence, the relative utility value of girls and boys creates differences in opportunity for girls' and boys' participation in decision-making.

I underscore the influence of the country's socialisation pattern in developing children and young people's relational identity, which values interdependence in familial and social relations. I show that the objective of this particular socialisation is to make children and young people conform to prevailing social norms and values of reciprocity, deference to adult authority and control that constrain children and young people from being self-expressive and pursuing personal goals. Furthermore, gender ideologies of honour and shame influence girls' and boys' opportunities to participate in decision-making, which is further intersected by children and young people's various social identities.

Chapter Five focuses on the factors that facilitate children and young people's participation in decision-making by presenting case studies of children and young

people's participation in democratic processes. Drawing on the concept of social capital, I analyse three case studies of children and young people's networks. I demonstrate that networks play a key role in creating bonding and bridging social capital to enable children and young people to access resources and power by empowering children and young people and ensuring inclusive representation.

Chapter Six examines children and young people's relationships with their families through the concepts of protection and moral economy. First, I demonstrate that children and young people's real vulnerability to the external environment in which they live shapes children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in family level decision-making. Second, I argue that family relationships are inherently interdependent between generations in which particularly gender and class play critical roles. I examine socialisation processes in Bangladesh and highlight the relational influences in parent-child interactions that constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making. Yet, I demonstrate that by contributing to familial interdependencies, children and young people practice active citizenship.

Chapter Seven explores children and young people's relationships to society. I examine intergenerational and intra-generational relationships between various child-adult social positions and between peers to understand the sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes that marginalise children and young people in influencing decision-making. Drawing on the concepts of generation, social worlds, social exchange, and ecological theory of human development I argue that children and young people are embedded in interdependent social relationships.

I therefore underscore the importance of analysing social relations and structures of power that impact on children and young people's lives through everyday and institutional practices. I conclude by showing that while children and young people's adherence to social norms and values constrains their behavioural capabilities to participate in decision-making, children and young people's engagement with social structures nevertheless points to their practice of active citizenship.

In Chapter Eight, I investigate children and young people's relationships with the state by examining various institutional processes. Using the concept of social exclusion, I contend that the country's particular political and development frameworks contribute to

creating a political context that causes children and young people's social, political and structural exclusion from influencing macro-level decision-making.

I demonstrate that children and young people's perspectives remain largely unheard due to a lack of political commitment to translating children and young people's perspectives into practice. In this process, official ideologies about childhood and inadequate institutional processes in the absence of a welfare society play a critical exclusionary role in children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making in public and development policies and services in Bangladesh.

Chapter Nine, Conclusions, provides a review of the way my research questions the dominant assumptions that children and young people are exclusively rights-bearing individuals who participate in decision-making that affects their lives. My findings demonstrate the significance of situating children and young people's participation in wider sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts. I show that considering key social values that guide children and young people's lives is paramount in understanding the intricate connection between children and young people's embeddedness in various social and political relations and their opportunities and thereby choices in decision-making in both private and public spaces.

I argue that both individual and social processes are therefore worthy of investigation to understand the sources of structural power that shape children and young people's agency and the actual choices that children and young people make regarding their participation in decision-making. I contend that the idea of rights is useful at the macro level to hold the main duty bearer such as the government accountable to realise children and young people's social and economic rights and entitlements, whereas the concept of relationships is more helpful at community level to understand children and young people's opportunities to participation within various relational contexts.

I conclude the thesis by suggesting for taking a relational conception of rights to value both rights and relationships at different levels in advancing children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh and in similar contexts elsewhere.

Chapter 2 Theorising children and young people's participation in decision-making

Introduction

In this chapter I first present the prevailing assumptions in the literature that underpin the very idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making that affects their lives. I then explore the models, concepts and theories that support and advance children and young people's participation in decision-making and evaluate the key debates in this regard. I demonstrate that an individualised conception of children and young people's participation and the export of this modern childhood to developing countries through the UNCRC undervalue the importance of social, economic and political relations in which children and young people are embedded. I underscore the significance of paying attention to the impact of power networks on developing children and young people's relational identity which shapes children and young people's experiences of participation in making decisions.

I then introduce a number of key values with which I will engage in this thesis: duty, obligation, responsibility, reciprocity, interdependence, deference, and honour and shame as they apply to children and young people's participation in decisions and the way they play out in my research. In line with emerging debates on children and young people's participation in decision-making I conclude the chapter by stressing the significance of deepening the contextual understandings and analyses of individual and sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes of children and young people's participation in decision-making especially in the Majority World contexts (see for instance, Theis, 2007: 1; Abebe, 2013: 73; Morrow, 2013a: 86, 88). In this thesis the term Majority World or Global South refers to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America where the majority of population, poverty and lifestyles are located. Minority World or Global North refers to the wealthy OECD countries (Punch and Tisdall, 2012: 241).

The UNCRC and the globalisation of modern childhood

Generally, the idea of rights-based participation connects with values more prevalent in Western affluent nation-states including individualism and self-reliance (Nevile, 2010: 3; Wyness, 2012). The key assumption that underlies the idea of children and young people's participation is that of the rights-bearing individual participating child.

According to this liberal perspective, children and young people are individual beings with personal agency and with the notion of being autonomous, self-determining subjects (Jamieson and Milne, 2012; Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 259; Benwell, 2013: 29). This globally dominant rights-based model enshrined in the UNCRC emphasises children and young people's participation in adult decision-making and assumes that adults take responsibilities for other forms of rights such as children and young people's rights to provision and protection (Wyness, 2013: 344).

Thus, there is an emphasis on individualised models of childhood, and the overwhelming dominance of the 'child as agent' model in the child participation discourse (Wyness, 2012). Following from this understanding, it is therefore assumed that children and young people should have an 'authentic' voice and are able to actively participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Therefore, along with the emergence of childhood studies and sociocultural theory, much of the current focus on children and young people having legitimate voices of their own and thereby their participation in decision-making is premised on the UNCRC (Hart, 2008a: 407; Reynaert et al., 2009: 521; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010: 344-345; Burr, 2014: 167). In this way, the ideal vision of childhood of the industrial world, innocent child victim on the one hand and the young deviant on the other, was almost universally globalised through human rights legislation such as the UNCRC at the international level and international development policies and social policy at the national level (Boyden, 1990; Burman and Stacey, 2010).

However, the criticisms of the UNCRC and reservations about its rights-based approach to promote children's interests and welfare emanate from a number of positions along the philosophical, ideological and political spectrum (Boyden, 1990; Stephens, 1995; Burman, 1996; Burr, 2002; Burman and Stacey, 2010; Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014: 56). For instance, drawing on research in sociology and social anthropology, Boyden (1990: 197-198) outlines a number of challenges in the globalisation of Western conception of childhood to South.

First, within certain biological constrains, childhood is largely a social construct in various forms in diverse contexts (see also, Nieuwenhuys, 1998). As such, different competencies and incapacities associated with childhood in different cultures can offer contradictory conceptions of the child. Therefore, there are criticisms of the complexities associated with efforts in applying the dominant construction of the child and childhood

based on age (Balagopalan, 2011; Tisdall and Punch, 2012) in the absence of the material conditions of modernity that have shaped children economically, socially and politically (Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014). Researchers therefore question the universal applicability of the globally and geopolitically dominant theorising on children and childhood in diverse cultures and contexts (Stephens, 1995: 39-40; Harper et al., 2010; Huijsmans, 2015).

For instance, the process of the transition from childhood to adulthood can differ significantly between countries and between cultures. The Western conceptualisation of normal childhoods- including survival, schooling and anti-labour legislation- systematically dismisses the plurality of pathways to attain majority, the relativity of children and young people's needs (Harper et al., 2010). Therefore, the exporting of the UNCRC in its predominant Western orientation largely ignores the cultural diversity and economic realities in the vast Global South, which are further complicated by various forms of inequalities and differences based on gender, generation, class, ethnicity, caste, geography and so on.

Second, the UNCRC's definition of family and family responsibility accords certain rights and obligations to children, which denies the role of extended families in customary law in many societies such as in Asia and Africa. The focus of this conception of the child of the Minority World is on children and young people's protection, the role of parents and governments in children's welfare and children's limited opportunities for participation in adult decision-making but not participation in paid work as a major livelihood experience in childhood. Thus, childhood is conceptually and spatially segregated from work and is associated with schooling, at home and being heard by adult decision-makers. Researchers points to the danger of transplanting this Western conception of nuclear family and individual rights to the Global South especially in the absence of welfare provisions (Boyden, 1990; Stephens, 1995; Burman, 1996; Aitken et al., 2008; Philo and Swanson, 2008; Tisdall and Punch, 2012).

Third, unlike in the industrialised world where premium is placed upon development of individuality and assurance of individual rights, maintaining group solidarity over individual needs and interests is the survival mechanism in the vast majority of the peasant-based societies in the Global South. There has been growing criticisms in development studies regarding the misapplication of the 'global child' to children and

young people in the Majority World contexts. In the context of the Majority World, there are criticisms regarding the unhelpful practice of perceiving children and young people as rights-bearing individuals, rather than having responsibilities and are embedded in generational relationships within families and communities.

For instance, the tensions between the UNCRC and African conceptualisations of childhood resulted in an alternative articulation of children's rights in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). A growing number of empirical evidence support this claim that the tradition and practice of interdependency in familial relationships in many Majority World contexts in the absence of state welfare system challenges the dominant conception of the individualised model of childhood and child participation in the UNCRC (Punch, 2002b; White, 2002; Burman and Stacey, 2010; Abebe, 2013; Burr, 2014).

Instead of viewing rights universally, researchers therefore urge to consider the subjectivity of rights that rights must be seen in their sociocultural and economic context (Balagopalan, 2011, 2014). For instance, in the context of India, Balagopalan draws on street working children's experiences and eloquently demonstrates how these street working children's lives and their rights are intricately tied up with their everyday contexts.

Finally, researchers argue that there has been a serious disjuncture between the protective ideologies of child welfare embodied in child rights legislation such as the UNCRC as well as national policy and the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of vast majorities of the Global South (Boyden, 1990; Abebe and Bessell, 2011; Balagopalan, 2014). Therefore, social policy based on the conception of the universal idea of childhood enshrined in the UNCRC can penalise and criminalise the childhoods of the already disadvantaged families who are unable to fulfil the standard of the UNCRC. For instance, due to policy divide between formal employment or waged labour and more informal types of child work, the majority of working children in the Global South fall under the parameter of social welfare departments rather than the ministries of labour. As such, children involved in work are largely excluded from the services and benefits of organised labour market (Boyden, 1990).

Moreover, the export of the Western ideology of work-free and responsibility-free childhoods to the Global South resulted in national governments making schooling compulsory and adopting anti-child labour legislation (Boyden, 1990). As a result, while childhood became increasingly homogenised at legislation and policy level, the experience of the vast majority of individual children of the Global South continued to be shaped by differences and diversities along the lines of class, gender, generation, caste, ethnicity, geography and so on (Abebe and Bessell, 2011; Balagopalan, 2014). Therefore, there has been a growing call by childhood researchers to take a postcolonial perspective for nuanced understanding of the global construction of childhood (see, Nieuwenhuys, 2013).

In the next section, I discuss how the UNCRC's liberal conception of children and young people's rights to participation in decision-making generate a number of concepts, theories and models that guide both policies and practices across cultures and contexts globally.

Concepts, theories and models of children and young people's participation in decision-making

There is no coherent theory on children and young people's participation in decision-making. According to Boyden and Ennew (1997), there are two interpretations of the term participation. In its simplest form, participation can mean taking part or being present, which emphasises the process. It can also stand for transferring power in order for participants to influence decisions that include both processes and outcomes. For instance, Hart (1992: 5) defines participation as 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives'. Thomas (2012a: 12) distinguishes between consultation and participation. According to Thomas, consultation offers opportunities for children to express their views, which are then taken into account more or less by the decision-makers. On the other hand, participation is ensured when children have the opportunity to directly share in decision-making processes and outcomes.

An analysis of the above definitions reflects diverse power relationships between children, young people and adults. A further distinction between a utilitarian and a transformative understanding of children's participation in decision-making offered by

Theis (2007: 3) is instructive for this thesis to understand the power relationships in children and young people's participation in decision-making.

According to Theis (2007: 3), the utilitarian approach views children as consumers and focuses on children as potential resources seeking their contributions and services and on children's responsibilities. Therefore, this palliative form of participation does not challenge existing hierarchies and power relations between children, young people and adults. In this approach, children and young people have hardly any power over decision-making or adult authority.

In contrast, the transformational approach views children's participation as a process of social change through addressing internal relations between children and adults. By challenging and changing the existing child-adult power relations, this approach transforms the asymmetrical social position of children and young people in a way that enables children and young people to have greater control and power over personal and collective decision-making. A number of models have been generated to translate children and young people's participation into practices which address issues of power and empowerment in child-adult interactions in order to ensure more genuine and authentic participation of children and young people (Thomas, 2012a: 13-14; Wyness, 2012).

For instance, using a ladder as a metaphor to illustrate the different degrees of initiation and collaboration, Hart (1992; 1997: 40) distinguishes various types of child-adult interactions evident in participatory practices. Hart's ladder reveals degrees of participation progressing from manipulation to child-initiated actions. The ladder has eight rungs. The bottom three represent forms of 'non-participation' ('manipulation', 'decoration' and 'tokenism') through to a middle level where children and young people are 'assigned but informed' or 'consulted and informed', followed by higher rungs ('adult initiated, shared decisions with children', 'child-initiated and directed'). At the top, 'child-initiated, shared decisions with adults' are found. The highest form of participation which is child-initiated can be challenging for adults ensuring children and young people's meaningful participation (Thomas, 2012a: 12).

An analysis of Hart's (1992) ladder points to two basic principles that Hart emphasises in his ladder metaphor, that is, choice and context (Hart, 1997: 42; Bessell and Gal, 2009:

290). The first point is that the particular level of participation very much depends on the children and young people involved, their particular environment including their cultural attitude to participation, social roles, age, developing capacity and the specific competencies of the individual child and the very purpose of participation (Hart, 1997: 29-42; McNeish, 1999: 193; Bessell and Gal, 2009: 290). A second important contribution of Hart's model is the emphasis on the role of adults and the importance of relationships in child-adult interactions, which is context-specific and shaped by social roles (Hart, 1997: 36).

However, criticisms have been levelled at Hart's ladder, namely that it sets the standard of participation as full empowerment and implies that participatory progress is linear in a hierarchical order (for example, McNeish, 1999: 193). These criticisms generated the development of alternative frameworks by making some refinements to Hart's ladder. Of them, three frameworks (Franklin, 1997; Treseder, 1997; Shier, 2001) are most useful in discussing the issues of power and relationships (Thomas, 2012a: 14). By omitting the three 'non-participation' rungs, and flattening the ladder to remove the hierarchical element, Treseder (1997) sets out five types of 'degrees' of participation in a circular layout. The objective is two-fold.

First, to establish that different types of activities and relationships are appropriate in different settings and contexts. Second, to flag the idea that every participatory initiative is valuable even in activities that involve a lesser degree of power or engagement. Therefore, not every participatory initiative aims to reach the highest possible level of child-directedness or joint-directedness. By adding two further rungs at the bottom – 'adults rule' and 'adults rule kindly' – Franklin (1997) changes the order of the three highest rungs, so that 'children in charge' is at the top, followed by 'children lead, adults help', and then 'joint decision'.

Following Arnstein's (1969) original formulation of 'citizen power', Franklin's ladder therefore positions children and young people from a complete lack of power to complete power. Similarly, Shier's (2001: 115) model of 'pathways to participation' also views power as crucial. In order to achieve full participation, Shier considers that adults need to explicitly commit to share their power by giving some of it to children and young people (Thomas, 2012a: 14).

Thus, two different strands are evident in the models for children and young people's participation in decision-making (Mason and Bolzan, 2010: 125; Thomas, 2012a: 14). In one the top position is shared decision-making while in the other, participation lies in the extent to which adults hand over power to children and young people. As a result, researchers criticise the way power has been conceptualised in these typologies as a commodity or capacity, which can be transferred by powerful adults to powerless children and young people (for instance, Gallagher, 2008).

Nevertheless, researchers (for instance, Thomas, 2012a) also argue that these two somewhat contradictory strands can co-exist in the practices of children and young people's participation in decision-making. This understanding leads to conceptualising two competing visions of children and young people's participation: one that is viewed in terms of social relations – networks, inclusion, and opportunities for social connection – and the other, which is viewed in relation to political relations: power, challenge, and change (Thomas, 2012a: 14-15).

According to the above conceptualisation, both rights and relationships are therefore important in children and young people's lives to enable them to participate in both private and public spaces. An attempt to implement the rights-based participation of the individualised child in the Majority World contexts has generated much debate. It thereby reveals the complexities and ambiguities of translating the theoretical ideals of children and young people's participation in decision-making into practice. I turn to these debates in the following section.

Rights or relationships? Key debates in children and young people's participation in decision-making

Both rights and relationships are important in ensuring children and young people's rights to participate in decisions. In discussing dilemmas and challenges of children and young people's participation in the context of Bangladesh, White (2007: 509-510) argues that while the appeal to rights can be a fruitful tool for macro-level structural reform or to monitor progress, it may not be a very suitable approach to work in local and practical contexts. For instance, researchers (Jensen, 2007; White, 2007: 510; Jensen, 2014) reveal that when working with the employers of working children and young people, the staff of development agencies in Bangladesh often translate rights-talk into relationship and obligation.

There has been increasing call by childhood researchers to acknowledge children and young people's economic and non-economic contribution to households especially in the absence of a welfare society and thereby child-adult interdependence in family and community relationships (Wyness, 2012). In other contexts such as in Australia, researchers (see for instance, Bessell, 2010) also argue that a rights-approach can be very effective at the macro level in influencing policy rhetoric to improve the lives of children and young people whereas a relationship approach can be more effective at the micro level in daily life practices.

Therefore, although there is a tension between these two conflicting concepts, rights and relationships, both are significant in children and young people's lives. That is, the idea of relationships is useful regarding participation grounded in children and young people's everyday life such as in the family, community and the rights concept is significant in relation to participation in more formal institutions and structures such as those in government. These concepts thus point to social and political dimensions of children and young people's participation in decision-making (Thomas, 2012a: 17, 22).

There is a close association between rights, obligations and responsibilities. However, the framing of the UNCRC's voice-based discursive forms of participation in decision-making excludes the material dimensions of participation that many children and young people are engaged with, especially in the Majority World, and thereby disregards the interdependencies in familial and social relations (Wyness, 2012).

Researchers therefore express concerns that the global child rights advocacy to change family norms and relations in line with the UNCRC disturbs existing patterns of social relations, which are based on interdependencies and responsibilities and may potentially make children vulnerable to greater insecurities in the absence of a welfare system (for instance, Pupavac, 2011: 306). They argue that global advocacy of children's voice-based participation rights disturbs and destabilises communities' social and economic expectations by comparing child-adult relations with global children's rights norms. Thus, the UNCRC sits very awkwardly with the relational contexts and the power generated within that context in which children and young people are embedded.

Therefore, an acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of rights, powerlessness, economic vulnerability and a lack of political identity is imperative to address issues of

rights and processes of social exclusion including participation in decisions within different arenas of children and young people's lives (for instance, Jones and Welch, 2010: 64). This understanding of the interconnectedness between rights and relationships suggests that there is an interwoven relationship between children and young people's rights and the experiences of other members within a society or community.

A relational lens helps us to understand that children and young people's rights to participate in decision-making occur within a context and within a complex set of different interests and relations (Alderson, 2008; Jones and Welch, 2010: 68; Tobin, 2013: 424). This relational understanding of participation sits uneasily with the UNCRC's powerful image of the rights-bearing individual child having an authentic, unmediated voice within a social and political space with relative autonomy from adults (Thomas, 2012a; Wyness, 2012).

The UNCRC's autonomous child image also contributed to a significant shift in childhood research and development practice from a focus on adult-mediated children and young people's participation to children and young people's perspectives being central to the processes of research, analysis and practice. Therefore, a search for children and young people's authentic forms of participation has resulted in adults' marginal role and perspectives within the analyses of children and young people's participation.

This shift reflects the increasing emphasis in the academic and professional practices placed on children and young people's agency and competency and the creation of more autonomous space for their participation (Wyness, 2012). Thus, the idea of the rights-bearing individual participating child has generated much criticism, as well as challenges in translating the ideals of children and young people's participation into practice, especially in the Majority World contexts.

In the following section, I discuss how a liberal view of autonomy and the search for authenticity in children and young people's participation in decisions disempowers children and young people politically and thereby ignores the contexts in which children and young people are embedded in relational structures.

Autonomy—as an independent self

It is common that participation and voice are used interchangeably in childhood studies. There has been criticism among childhood and feminist researchers regarding the association between participation and voice with a move towards individual autonomy as a benchmark of an autonomous adult (Nick, 2001; Prout, 2005; Bessell, 2010: 207; Wyness, 2012). The conceptualisation of a competent adult is linked to the liberal view whereby rights are granted on the basis of independence, autonomy and competence (Jones and Welch, 2010: 49). This liberal conception of autonomy as the production of sovereign subjects has been increasingly challenged by researchers (see for instance, Lister, 2007: 713) who argue that autonomy has to be understood in relational terms and thereby needs to be positioned within social relationships (see for instance, Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000: 21; Nevile, 2010: 2-3).

A post-modern and feminist approach to the ethics of care re-defines autonomy in relational terms, as identity achieved through relations with others rather than independence achieved through separation and rights claims (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006). Senett (2003: 120) defines autonomy as 'a strength of character based on the perceptions of others'. This post-modern understanding of the concept of autonomy suggests that the individual comes to know him or herself as being distinctive only through accepting his or her own difference from others (Bath, 2013: 365). However, this relational type of self-knowledge might encourage abuses of power, which requires a post-modern interpretation of power (Sennett, 2003).

Drawing on Foucault, (1988: 5), Bath (2013: 366) points to the relational nature of power, saying 'power is embedded in relationships between people and sits alongside autonomy as an ethic of care for the self'. Thus, in Foucault's analyses, power is viewed as power over self, or self-control, to regulate power over others. In relation to the ethics of care, the view of feminist philosophers of a relational autonomy suggests that care entails responsibility in which the ethical carer engages herself within caring practices. Such ethical caring practices necessitate listening to the cared-for, thereby mitigating the issue of power as well (see for instance, Sevenhuijsen, 1998: 61). This feminist conception of relational autonomy, which is concerned with moral identity as a social practice rather than care for self as a practice of freedom, is crucial in re-conceptualising children and young people's participation in decisions in relational terms (Bath, 2013: 366). Thus,

autonomy in children and young people's participation in decisions needs to be positioned within social-relational understanding (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000: 21).

Although it is debatable that there is a single 'Minority World' conceptualisation of childhood and children's rights, the framing of the UNCRC suggests an individual identity of the participating child having an authentic voice that is detached from reciprocity, responsibilities and relationships that are central to various cultural contexts (Abebe, 2007: 91; Bessell, 2009b; Abebe and Bessell, 2011: 770-772; Jamieson and Milne, 2012; Pells, 2012: 436; Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 259; van Blerk, 2012: 321; Abebe, 2013: 73; Jensen, 2014: 11). In such contexts, both children, young people and adults develop and refine their generational identities through performing respective duties and responsibilities which reveal intergenerational interdependencies (Alanen, 2009; Plows, 2012; Punch and Tisdall, 2012: 244).

Therefore, rather than reflecting rights-bearing individuals, children and young people's voices are mediated through their identities as relational beings in those contexts. Based on the above relational understanding of participation, the following section shows how a search for an 'authentic' voice creates much debate, criticism and tension in implementing the ideal of children and young people's participation in decisions into practice.

Authenticity in participation

Drawing on Mannion (2007), Wyness (2012: 429) refers to authentic forms of participation in which 'adults [are] occupying more marginal positions and standpoints'. Michael Wyness has identified several key weaknesses in dominant approaches to children and young people's participation, namely, the issues of unmediated voice, the centrality of children and young people's agency and receding role of adults, and a unitary voice of children and young people. In the following section, I use the above framework of Wyness (2012) for critiquing children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Unmediated voice

Researchers question the idea of children and young people with an unmediated voice in decision-making (see for instance, Thomas, 2007; Wyness, 2012). There is critical

discussion within childhood studies over the extent to which children and young people's voices can be unmediated by adult influence. There has been a significant shift from a focus on adult-mediated participation that could mute children and young people's voices to a new focus on children and young people's perspectives as being central to the process of research and development practices. Researchers point to a number of factors that underlie this dominant shift (Mannion, 2007; Wyness, 2009a). For instance, adults' vested interest in children and young people's participation results in adults playing partial and regulatory roles.

As a result, children and young people's participation is dominated by adult-centred agendas and structures. The adult-centred agendas are reflected in the practices of children and young people's participation, which are often linked to preparation for future citizenship rather than recognising and valuing children and young people's present experiences.

Thus, the practice of adults structuring and regulating roles in children and young people's participation has generated criticisms around the artificial, manipulated and tokenistic nature of children and young people's participation in decision-making (for instance, Hart, 2008b). This tendency has led academic and professional practitioners to place greater emphasis on children and young people's agency and competence, and to the creation of more autonomous space for their participation.

It is evident from the above discussion that a search for children and young people's unmediated authentic participation points to an association between participation and voice with a move towards individual autonomy as a benchmark of an autonomous adult (Lee, 2001; Stainton Rogers, 2004: 129; Prout, 2005; Bessell, 2010: 207; Wyness, 2012: 4). Researchers question such practices and challenge to what extent such participation makes a formative difference to decision-making processes (for example, Wyness, 2012: 2).

Drawing on English welfare professionals' experiences with young people, Pinkney (2011: 41) analyses young people's voices through a relational lens with adults and points to the difficulties in obtaining young people's authentic voice. Likewise, both Kranzl-Nagl's (2010) study of young people's participation across six European countries and Mason and Bolzan's (2010) cross-cultural research with children and young people in the

Asia-Pacific region identify that children and young people value the facilitative role of adults.

Consequently, there has been a growing call from researchers within childhood studies to reposition children and young people's participation in decision-making and autonomy as being embedded within interdependent child-adult social relations (Mayall, 2012: 349-350; Punch and Tisdall, 2012; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Wyness, 2012; Abebe, 2013: 75-76; Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2013a: 9, 12).

In the following section, I argue that the analyses of children and young people's participation in decision-making give insufficient importance to the significance of adults' roles and perspectives.

Receding role of adults

Although it is hard to support the claim that in research or practice adults' roles have receded, analyses of children and young people's participation often focus on the children and young people's unmediated voice. Thus, the tendency of seeking children and young people's authentic and unmediated perspectives eventually led to excessive focus in the analyses on the views of children and young people and the receding role of adults (Fielding, 2007: 304; White and Choudhury, 2007: 530; Wyness, 2012).

In addition, a paradox arose over the role of adults in children and young people's participation in decisions by generating a tension between children and young people's right to participation in decisions and adults' responsibility for their protection. Granting children and young people autonomy may result in distancing them from the protection and control of adults (Wyness, 2012). Researchers (for instance, Wyness, 2012) argue that in practice, institutional capacity and the dispositions of children, young people and adults rather than the centrality of children and young people's perspectives and autonomy, often shape the nature and opportunity of children and young people's participation in decisions. This understanding points to the crucial role of adults in children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Moreover, researchers argue that sometimes adults may be in a better position to advocate for children and young people's interests than children and young people would be through their own direct involvement in advocacy (Hart, 2008a; Wyness, 2012). This idea

of the significant role of adults is particularly relevant at the political level where children and young people have limited political leverage or access to the political mainstream and in contexts where countries have a commissioner or ombudsperson for children and young people (Wyness, 2012). In this regard, researchers underscore the importance of co-construction of knowledge by children, young people and adults.

Researchers (Hart, 2008a: 414; White and Choudhury, 2010: 41) critique the analyses of prevailing practice of treating children and young people as exclusive experts whose ideas are valued over adults, rather than as complementary to those of adults. They argue that ignoring the role of adults risks missing significant issues of concern, namely that children and young people may have limited direct knowledge. Likewise, Bjerke's (2011a) research with Norwegian young people suggests the importance of being treated as 'differently equal partners' by adults rather than seeking greater independence and autonomy from adults in the process of children and young people's participation in decisions.

Therefore, researchers question the focus on individuality, personal agency and children and young people's exclusive viewpoints in their participation in decisions. Instead, researchers have increasingly stressed the importance of child-adult collaboration and partnership in analyses and practices of children and young people's participation in decision-making (Wall, 2011; Jamieson and Milne, 2012; Moore and Mitchell, 2012: 197; Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 259; Wyness, 2012).

For instance, drawing on advanced theories of developmental psychology (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003), Tisdall and Punch (2012) underscore the importance of relationships for learning. Theories of positive youth development suggest that there are close associations between contexts of structured activities and features of positive youth development (Ramey and Rose-Krasnor, 2012: 85). The objective of this shared space is to create a more collaborative environment within which children and young people can comfortably participate alongside adults.

In this regard, the idea of 'children's space' (Moss and Petrie, 2002) is helpful in understanding interdependencies in child-adult relations regarding children and young people's participation in decisions. This understanding of space resonates in Barber's (2007) use of 'engagement zone', where children, young people and adults are actively

and creatively engaged in utilising these spaces. Therefore, the notion of space has ethical and social dimensions and can create opportunities for interdependent relations for children and young people to be heard through partnership with adults.

However, childhood researchers have criticised the tendency to view children and young people's space as being associated with autonomy, and challenge this physical and material dimension. Instead, some researchers argue for a more multi-faceted understanding of the children and young people's space (Moss and Petrie, 2002: 143; Wyness, 2012; Moss, 2013). This understanding has led childhood researchers to call to examine how such spaces may be imbued with hierarchies and power relations (Mayo and Rooke, 2008; Cockburn, 2013).

In the following section, I discuss how a unitary voice-based conception of children and young people's authentic participation in decision-making generates much debate.

'Unitary' voice of children and young people

Another challenge associated with authenticity in children and young people's participation in decision-making is the implicit idea of a unitary voice of children and young people. This unitary conception of the participating child greatly relies on the idea of the child as an individual rights bearer (Wyness, 2012). There has been growing criticism in childhood studies, in children's geographies as well as in development studies, of this singular voice-based conception of participation. Researchers challenge the extent to which a singular voice represents the diversified views and experiences of all children and young people (Burke, 2007; Skelton, 2007; Hart, 2008a; Tisdall, 2010; Thomas, 2012a: 11; Nieuwenhuys, 2013: 4; Wyness, 2013: 340).

Therefore, the meaning of participation and issues of legitimacy and authenticity have been increasingly challenged. The dominance of children and young people within analyses of participation in decision-making obscures the various ways in which ideas of age are interspersed with other dimensions of difference such as social class, gender, ethnicity, caste, disability, geographical location, social identities and so on.

Thus, the diversity of childhood challenges the dominant unitary models of participatory children and young people and the meaning associated with this dominant conception. The diversity of childhood also holds the possibility that different groups of children and

young people can engage in different modes of participation in which adults play different roles (Wyness, 2012). Besides, this unitary voice-based model of participating children and young people reflects broader cultural trends of the powerful neoliberal and Eurocentric norms that privilege rationality and individualism which is evident for instance in the global discourse of compulsory school attendance and result-oriented education. This dominant voice-based participatory child model eventually disregards the cultural expectations of children and young people's intergenerational responsibilities across generations in the Global South (Punch and Tisdall, 2012).

In order to include less affluent contexts globally, researchers therefore argue that it is crucial to recognise how children and young people are embedded in their families, communities and societies and the ways in which they have to participate alongside adults and sometimes on behalf of adults for their own survival as well as survival of their families (Abebe and Bessell, 2011; Wyness, 2012: 6). Thus, the participation of children and young people takes a more collective character than an individualistic, voice-based understanding which suggests taking into account the cultural politics of a global childhood in diverse contexts (Jones and Welch, 2010: 76; James, 2011: 177; Balagopalan, 2013).

Following from the above discussion, understanding the cultural politics of childhood is central to understanding the ways in which children and young people's status as competent participants or active citizens unfolds in any society. The status of children and young people's participation, the recognition of how they already contribute to society as competent actors, and their inclusion or membership in society therefore reflect the particular constructions of childhood that underpin laws and policies for children and young people (James, 2011). In the following section, I discuss how the competency issue corresponding to incremental age dominates in the discourse and practices of children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Age—issues of representation

There has been considerable discussion in the literature of children and young people's participation regarding issues of representation of all different age groups of children and young people. While relationships are crucial in thinking about children and young people's participation in decisions, very young children need exclusive adult support to

meet their needs and to ensure that their needs and rights are met. However, by lumping all age groups into one the existing definition of a child enshrined in the UNCRC underestimates the needs, interests and perspectives of diverse age groups of children and young people.

Therefore, age is another challenge in relation to children and young people's representation and participation in decision-making. It has been argued that the younger the child, the harder it is for them to get opportunities for participation (Bessell, 2009a: 310; Shier, 2010: 32). Thus, the trend and practice of children and young people's participation in decision-making points to the dominance of older and more articulate young people in participatory practices (see for example, Cockburn, 2013: 11).

For example, Bessell (2009a: 310) argues that children and young people's participation in the Philippines heavily involves young people from older age groups, though there are some opportunities for younger children to participate in decision-making processes. This trend and practice of involving older groups of young people suggests that adults tend to link the worth and validity of children and young people's rights and perspectives to an appropriate level of competency and capacity, which is achieved through incremental age (Mayall, 2013; Wyness, 2013: 342). Such assumptions of adults about appropriate competency are therefore broadly based on factors such as age, which is increasingly being challenged especially by cross-cultural research (Bessell, 2009a; Jones and Welch, 2010: 96; Thomas, 2012a: 21).

Similarly, drawing on experiences in the UK, Wyness (2013: 343) argues that school-based participatory activities tend to follow along a developmental path giving older young people greater access to voice than younger children. In relation to children and young people's representation, the significant feature of the normative model of participation is thus its future adult orientation as competent adult citizens, as discussed in the following section.

Notions of future citizenship

Another significant feature in the normative model of children and young people's participation in decision-making is its future adult orientation (Wyness, 2013: 343). Children and young people's participatory activities tend to view participation as an

apprenticeship or training for turning children and young people into good, competent and responsible adult citizens, rather than focusing on its importance in their present lives.

For instance, in discussing competency, citizenship and the status of children and young people, Bessell (2009a: 305-306) critiques the Philippines National Framework for Children's Participation which identifies a positive causal link between participation and good citizenship. Bessell argues convincingly that when participation is conceived as training for adulthood and future citizenship, it is unlikely to be meaningful for children and young people's present needs and interests.

The implication of future-oriented conceptualisation is that instead of shaping policies and practices that have present salience for children, young people and societies, the objective of such participation is to turn children and young people into responsible adult citizens. Therefore, participation merely becomes an apprenticeship in competency for adulthood rather than creating space for children and young people's genuine political engagement (Bessell, 2009a: 306).

Similarly, critiquing public education in the US, Thomas (2012b: 155-156) argues that instead of aiming for critical thinking and freedom, public education primarily focuses on preparing children and young people to become members of a compliant adult workforce. Likewise, Heggart (2012: 83) criticises the teaching method of human rights education in Australian schools arguing that current practice emphasises didactic teaching and content knowledge. This approach helps in maintaining the status quo and the resultant oppression based on class, race and gender rather than equipping students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to actively engage in addressing oppression.

Drawing on British and Australian school contexts, Heggart (2012: 88) comments that children and young people are regimented in education systems and there is an absence of 'critical classroom' (Freire, 1998: 49) practice which could offer an opportunity for both students and teachers to engage in constructing and producing knowledge. As Freire (1998: 110) observes, education can serve two functions, either as an instrument to socialise the younger generation within the present system and thereby to reproduce the dominant ideology, or as the practice of freedom as the means to enable people to critically and creatively engage in the process of transformation of society.

However, the 'banking model' (Freire, 1970: 72) of education which relegates students as merely passive learners of knowledge points to a political ideology driven by economic imperatives to produce a compliant and competent adult workforce (Heggart, 2012: 89-90; Devine and Luttrell, 2013: 241). Similar arguments are evident in cross-cultural research. For instance, drawing on research in children and young people's educational experiences in Andrha Pradesh, India, Morrow (2013b) criticises the education system for its neoliberal policy trends. Morrow argues that the education system is devoid of participatory philosophy and tends to value producing future productive members of the society rather than considering children and young people's present needs, interests and concerns.

Therefore, children and young people's participation in decision-making also depends on children and young people's identity as politically relevant beings, their competency, relative status and value in society. For instance, drawing on Turner (1990), Bessell (2009a: 306) points to the particular significance that the issue of incompetence has in terms of children and young people's citizenship, and their ability and entitlement to shape policies and services. The very idea of incompetency justifies excluding children and young people from the category of citizenship.

Thus, childhood is associated with dependency, vulnerability, incompetence and lack of proficiency and a need for protection. Bessell (2009a: 306) further argues that such representation of childhood based on deficiencies contradicts the representation of children and young people as competent social actors. This view underscores the importance of examining ideologies or discourses in which subordinate categories such as children and young people are constructed (Cockburn, 2013: 191) and thereby their identity as competent citizens is denied.

There is a close association between children and young people's participation in influencing decisions and the idea of children and young people's citizenship. This is because children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making depends on interactions between the particular nature of the societies and communities in which they live and the wishes and intentions of children, young people, and adults individually as well as in groups (Jones and Welch, 2010: 18). Researchers thus stress the importance of understanding 'lived citizenship' (Lister, 2007: 695), which is, in a

particular context, how adults attribute agency to children and young people in and across different spheres of life that facilitate or constrain their participation in society.

In order to understand how citizenship is played out in practice in children and young people's lives, it is therefore crucial to investigate the key aspects of the cultural politics of childhood in any cultural context (James, 2011: 170-171). The key aspects of the cultural politics of childhood are first, the way adults actively interpret children and young people's competencies and capacities; and second, how children and young people themselves experience and respond to these adult conceptualisations of childhood (James and James, 2004; James, 2011: 167-168, 172).

It follows from the above discussion that in order to recognise children and young people as competent social actors, as active citizens and to acknowledge their participation and contribution to the society, the liberal notion of citizenship needs to be re-conceptualised as practice (Lister, 2007, 2008; Cockburn, 2013) and as children and young people's political identity (Kulynych, 2001). On the one hand, citizenship is conceived of as a practice considering that children and young people conform, negotiate and contribute to relationships of social interdependence (Lister, 2007, 2008; Cockburn, 2013).

On the other hand, citizenship as a political identity entails not only an individual commitment to and active practice of political ideals but also a reciprocal recognition of children and young people's political relevance (Kulynych, 2001). Thus, the importance of considering citizenship as a form of social practice as well as political identity is crucial. This is because understanding citizenship as a practice recognises that children and young people already contribute to various social relationships, and citizenship as political identity provides the basis for exercising the right and opportunity of children and young people to democratic participation in decision-making.

Therefore, there has been a growing call in childhood and feminist studies to re-define citizenship from the liberal individualist notions of competent and autonomous individuals to a relational notion of citizenship that emphasises social interdependence (Lister, 2007, 2008; Cockburn, 2013: 12, 17). For instance, in recognising that children and young people are already participating members in society which accords them with political identity Moosa-Mitha's (2005: 375, 377) theorisation of children's citizenship as 'difference-centred' is useful. The conceptualisation of citizenship as difference-

centred accords children and young people the right to participate differently in the social institutions and culture of a society. Such a difference-centred understanding of children and young people's citizenship challenges the adultist construction of power by including children and young people's own lived reality and subjective experiences from diverse backgrounds and ages.

This new conceptualisation of citizenship recognises children and young people's status as citizens which emphasises children and young people's active citizenship rather than seeing citizenship as a preparation for the responsibilities of adulthood (Kellett, 2011: 171). Therefore, children and young people's citizenship is understood as practice (Lister, 2007, 2008; Cockburn, 2013) to recognise children and young people's political identity as competent social actors who already participate in and contribute to society (Prout and James, 1997; James and James, 2008).

The difference-centred, relational approaches to citizenship as a practice and political identity inform my analyses in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight to argue how children and young people from diverse backgrounds and ages are engaged in familial and social interdependence and therefore practice active citizenship. On the one hand, alternative ideas of citizenship enable me to reveal that children and young people's lack of political identity causes their powerlessness and structural exclusion from influencing decision-making. On the other hand, the alternative and difference-centred understanding of citizenship enable me to recognise children and young people as politically relevant beings and therefore to show how their active citizenship unfolds through the practices of their already interdependent familial and social relationships.

In the preceding sections of this chapter, I have drawn on the key assumption of the rights-bearing individual participating child that underlies the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making. I then discussed the assumption of the participating child having an authentic voice in decision-making generated concepts, theories and models to advance children and young people's participation in decisions. Based on the above discussion, I have argued that children and young people's participation in decisions can be viewed in terms of their social relations and in terms of their political relations. Following from that, I have evaluated the key debates in childhood and children's participation literature which are centred on issues around rights or relationships regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making.

I have shown that an understanding of autonomy as an independent being or an independent subject can be less useful for the current discussion than a post-modern and feminist understanding of autonomy in relational sense. I have also demonstrated that seeking children and young people's authentic voice results in a receding role of adults in analyses of children and young people's participation and raises questions of representation of children and young people of diverse age and background.

Besides, I have argued that the tendency to consider age-based competency and future adult orientation of participatory initiatives underestimates children and young people's present needs, and contributions to various interdependent social relations. An evaluation of the debates and challenges of children and young people's participation in decision-making practices led me to suggest the relevance of both rights and relationships in children and young people's lives at different levels.

Following the above discussions, in order to understand the spaces and opportunities of children and young people's participation in the Majority World contexts such as Bangladesh, I now turn to identify and discuss key values that are central to child-adult as well as child-child social relations. Drawing on existing literature and intertwined with examples from Bangladesh, I present key values such as security, tradition, conformity and power and the way they play out in children and young people's participation in decisions that affect their lives.

Security, tradition, conformity and power: key values as guiding principles for children and young people's participation

Choice and decision-making concern freedom or capability to choose (Sen, 1999, 2005). According to Young (1990), people form their identities and capabilities from specific locations in communities and groups which can be oppressed. Therefore, children and young people's capabilities to participate in decision-making can be constrained in a dynamic and incremental way (Cockburn, 2013: 230) due to their engagement with key values that give meaning to their actions. In his theory of value content and structure, Schwartz (1992) defines values as 'desirable, abstract, trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives'. Similarly, Morrow (2013b: 259) defines social values 'as the norms, ideals and aspirations shared by people in specific locations and cultures'. Drawing on social anthropology and cross-cultural psychology, Morrow argues

that local ideas about how children and young people develop and learn profoundly shape experiences of childhood in a particular culture.

Therefore, children and young people's roles and responsibilities not only reflect views of their evolving competencies but also the learning requirement for their future adult roles. It is significant to note that although these social values reflect local cultural practices, they are greatly affected by powerful structural forces such as globalisation and development (Morrow, 2013b: 259).

In this section, I identify a number of values such as security, tradition, conformity and power and show how these values act as key guiding principles in generational relationships and within various social positions, especially in the Majority World contexts, which shape children and young people's experiences of participation. I argue that children and young people adhere to these values in order to act morally, which contributes to reproducing structures that shape children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decisions. The key values are embodied through children and young people's observance of local norms, customs and beliefs of duty, obligation, reciprocity and interdependence, as well as deference and honour and shame.

Interdependence—duty, obligation and reciprocity

Children and young people's engagement with morality or moral values through observance of norms of duty, obligation and reciprocity greatly shapes their experiences of participation in decision-making. Researchers argue that relationships are central to children and young people's lives (Mayall, 2000: 256; Tobin, 2013: 424). Cross-cultural studies show that children, young people and adults engage in a sense of duty, obligation and reciprocity to maintain the security and stability of relationships within families as well as security of the self (Twum-Danso, 2009; Jamieson and Milne, 2012; Punch and Tisdall, 2012; Abebe, 2013; Imoh, 2013). Such interdependency in intergenerational relationships at the individual level shapes opportunities available for children and young people to influence decisions. In discussing the values and impact of relationships on children and young people's lives, Cockburn (2013: 232) considers that rights, entitlements and interests obscure the real life issues of responsibilities, love and feelings that impact on issues of justice.

Similarly, Jones and Welch (2010: 34) argue that in societies and communities with strong religious beliefs or with strong hierarchical structures, the liberal concept of rights is subservient to the concept of duty: the duty of individuals to follow and obey the rule of the hierarchy or religious teaching. Adult-child relations in such contexts position adults at the top of the hierarchy. Children and young people are socialised to obey rules and carry out duties set by adults. This includes obeying adults' instructions and carrying out specific tasks which are also gendered. In such societies, women also hold a subservient position to men, accompanying duties associated with that position. White (2007) argues in the context of Bangladesh that in societies where the positions of children and young people and women are tied up with religion, and inequalities in status are considered part of a natural order of duty, a rights discourse can be very challenging.

In her analyses of the *somaj* (local community) in Bangladesh, White (2007: 512-513) argues that the concept of duty is identified by the common saying which states that 'In childhood girls are under the authority of their fathers; at marriage, under the authority of their husbands; in old age under the authority of their sons'. White further explains that the male guardians are full members of the society whereas women and children and young people belong to the *somaj* only by virtue of their relationship to men. Pointing to the idea of guardianship that is associated with duty, Jensen (2014: 2) in discussing female child domestics in Bangladesh similarly finds that 'children are typically socialised into a passive behaviour where one is supposed to live according to the preferences, wishes and dreams of parents or other guardians, and where one is seldom encouraged to think for oneself or express one's own opinions'.

Thus, children and young people in Bangladesh are brought up with the values of tradition, conformity and deference to accepting the decisions of guardians (Blanchet, 1996: 155). Engaging with the idea of duty of guardians is therefore a useful way to promote children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making (White, 2007: 518; Jensen, 2014). Similar findings of the role of adults or guardians and the idea of duty in children and young people's ability and opportunities to express themselves are evident in cross-cultural research. For instance, Twum-Danso's (2010: 135) study with children and young people in Ghana suggests the strong socialisation role of parents and guardians that includes discipline and punishment to develop children and young people's sense of responsibility and duty restricts children and young people's ability to express their opinions.

Intergenerational mutuality is also evident in children and young people's accounts in regards to children and young people's ability and opportunities to express their opinions. In the context of Bangladesh, Kabeer (2000: 25) points to the way key relations in children and young people's lives are often linked to intergenerational obligations or contracts. Kabeer (2000) draws on the idea of intergenerational contracts in her discussion of investment in children and young people's education, especially in societies without welfare systems or security in old age, such as in Bangladesh. Kabeer argues that while the decision for children and young people's education in such societies remains a private one, the decision invariably can be dominated by concern for parents' security in old age, rather than the long term interests of the child.

Jensen's (2007) study of female child domestics in Bangladesh similarly supports the view that parental decisions and practice to invest in their sons' education rather than in their daughters' education points to the parents' concern for old age security. Heissler's (2012) study on children and young people's migration for work in Bangladesh also highlights the impact of intergenerational interdependence on children and young people's choices and decision-making, which is also gendered.

Similarly, drawing on a study of working children in Bangladesh, White (2002a: 725) argues that children and young people place a premium on the quality of relationships and demonstrate a great sense of (in) justice and entitlement. Thus, childhood in Bangladesh is highly characterised by a sense of relatedness with and responsibility to children and young people's families and lack of personal autonomy.

The above findings resonate with other cross-cultural research. In discussing street children and young people's relations with their families in Cape Town, van Blerk (2012: 323) stresses the importance of understanding the household-family nexus as based on mutual and powerful obligations between generations through, for example, economic, education or labour transfer. Cross-cultural research thus has been increasingly underscoring the values of intergenerational mutuality and connectedness in children and young people's lives (Punch, 2002b, 2007; Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009: 191; Bessell, 2009b; Payne, 2012; Abebe, 2013; Boyden and Howard, 2013). For instance, drawing on the experiences of the role of children and young people in collective livelihood strategies in Ethiopia, Abebe (2013: 73, 75-77) focuses on the interconnectedness of rights, duties

and obligations, and teases out the social, personal and spatial contexts that shape children and young people's agency and opportunities to pursue personal goals.

In the following section, I discuss how social norms and customs of responsibility, mutuality and interdependence and power in generational relationships create tension between the ideas of children and young people's protection and their participation in decision-making.

Tensions between protection and participation

There is an inherent tension between the ideas of protection and participation (Thomas, 2012a). Protection concerns children and young people's interests as well as the interests of the family. On the one hand, due to their roles and responsibilities as guardians, adults are concerned to protect children and young people from risks, danger and external vulnerability associated with participation. On the other hand, due to interdependence in generational relationships especially in the Global South, adults seem to be concerned to protect children and young people from developing an independent identity. Researchers note that the emphasis on the child's individuality in child participation discourse underestimates local cultures that especially respect reciprocity and relationships, and adult responsibilities and duties towards children and young people (Montgomery et al., 2003: 167).

In the context of Bangladesh, Blanchet (1996: 40) observes that Bangladeshi society places considerable importance and value in children and young people's protection. In such a context, the country's dominant culture does not encourage the gradual expression of children and young people's individual personalities. Children and young people in Bangladesh are traditionally considered as having not yet developed any reason. It is therefore the role and responsibility of guardians to protect children and young people's needs and interests. In this way, adults in Bangladesh are vested with extensive power and authority to determine the best interests of children and young people (Blanchet, 1996). Thus, social norms that value adult authority and power over children and young people shapes their agency and opportunities to participate in decisions and therefore the actual choices children and young people make regarding participation and decisions.

However, in contrast to the popular view of adult power as being a negative force, child-adult relations in Bangladesh are characterised by dual faces of adult power over children

and young people. For instance, White (2002b: 1096) argues that while all child-adult relations are imbued with power, the issue is how this power is viewed. The above discussion implies that two faces of adult power exist in Bangladeshi society. On the one hand, there are examples of adult power, which is according to Patterson (1982), 'personalistic' in nature and can be evident in the form of excessive control and authority over children and young people (Conticini and Hulme, 2007: 201). On the other hand, as Blanchet (1996) notes, a more benevolent and gentle power can be equally observed in the way children and young people in Bangladesh are extensively and carefully nurtured and protected in their best interests.

Therefore, a strong ambivalence towards children and young people's participation in decision-making prevails at all levels in Bangladeshi society (Singh, 2003). This ambivalence is further intersected by gender, class, ethnicity, caste, geographic location and children and young people's varied social identities. The ambivalence in participation in decision-making creates a further tension in translating the ideal of children and young people's participation in decisions into practice in Bangladesh as it is elsewhere in the Global South. For instance, Twum-Danso (2010: 135-136) argues that in Ghana, children's dependency on parents submits children to the personal power of parents through control and authority. Such adult power constrains children and young people's opportunities to freely express their opinions.

It follows from the above discussions that children and young people's agency and opportunities to influence decision-making are embedded in a complex network of interdependent family relations. In these interdependent family relations, adults, children and young people engage themselves in valuing the security of family relationships as well as the security of the self through duty, obligation and reciprocity. Children and young people's opportunities to express their opinions therefore need to be understood within powerful moral economies (Boyden and Howard, 2013: 355; Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2013a: 11). This understanding reinforces the idea that social practices such as children and young people's participation in decision-making are relational (White, 2002b: 1099). Therefore, a relational conceptualisation of participation requires investigating children and young people's sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts, including children and young people's gendered roles and responsibilities (see for instance, Boyden and Howard, 2013: 365).

Apart from social values of interdependence in generational relationships, values associated with the norms of deference to adult authority and control effectively shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making as I discuss in the following section.

Conforming to power—deference to adult authority and control

Children and young people's engagement with morality through deference to adult power of authority and control is another key process that shapes children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in Bangladesh (Heissler, 2012: 508; Islam, 2012: 60) as they are in many cultures especially in the Majority World. Making children and young people conform to cultural or religious ideas of moral behaviour is an integral part of socialisation for the formation of children and young people's relational identity found in Bangladeshi society.

Similar socialisation practice is evident in cross-cultural research. In the context of Ghana, researchers note that an extreme form of respect for elders results in children lacking confidence and skill to articulate their opinions (for instance, Twum-Danso, 2010: 138; Imoh, 2013). It follows from the above examples that sources of social identity are crucial for developing children and young people's self, which shapes their experiences of participation in decision-making. In this regard, the idea of social identity offers a useful framework to understand cultural effects on the processes of developing children and young people's social identities.

According to Brewer and Yuki (2007: 311), there are two bases of social identity: relationship-based and category-based. On the one hand, in relationship-based social identities, cultural systems generally depend on various forms of social connection as the primary locus for identifying social self and exerting social control over individual behaviour.

Therefore, cultural values and practices that embody implicit rules of social exchange, expectations of mutual obligation, and sources of social approval such as obedience, respect, deference, honour and shame greatly shape individuals' social identities. These cultural effects of social identities in turn determine the role of social identification in interpersonal and intergroup behaviour (Brewer and Yuki, 2007: 312).

On the other hand, category-based social identity is associated with individualism. According to category-based social identity, the relative importance of values of independence versus interdependence in relations between the self and others in the society constrain and shape the nature of collective selves. In societies with relational collectivistic values, social identification with groups necessitates fulfilling obligations, mutual interdependence, and responsibility to in-group members in exchange for security and mutual support (Brewer and Yuki, 2007: 312).

An understanding of the distinction between relationship-based and category-based social identities points to why and how children and young people in the Majority World demonstrate respect for local tradition by conforming to accepted standards of moral behaviour. For instance, researchers (Blanchet, 1996: 41-42; Islam, 2012: 60-61) argue that child-adult relations in Bangladesh are characterised by a high degree of respect and obedience towards adults.

Similarly, Heissler's (2009; 2012: 506-507) study of child labour migration and choice in Bangladesh reveals that children and young people learn many elements of honour and avoiding being shamed, such as obeying parents, respecting elders, and not swearing, through socialisation from early childhood. Likewise, Jensen's (2014) study of female child domestics in Bangladesh shows that children and young people show deference to their employers by being obedient even in exploitative work conditions in exchange for material and social security.

The above examples resonate with experiences of Twum-Danso's study (2010: 36, 38; Imoh, 2013) with children and young people in Ghana which suggests that obedience and respect for elders are core to childhood experiences and are integral to socialisation. Twum-Danso also comments that extreme forms of obedience and respect make children and young people fearful of adults, and this constrains their ability to freely express their opinions. In the context of Ghana as it is elsewhere in the Majority World such as in Bangladesh, children and young people's socialisation to conform to adult authority can be viewed as developing their relational identities within the nexus of interdependent relationships between generations.

Observing *purdah*—maintaining honour and avoiding shame

Observing the norms of *purdah* through maintaining honour and avoiding shame, which mostly affects girls rather than boys, is another structuring process of girls' and boys' different experiences of participation in decision-making. *Purdah* literally means curtain or veil. However, the term *purdah* is widely used to refer to the system of seclusion of Muslim women from outsiders. It is a marker to maintain women's moral integrity (Kabeer, 2001).

In the context of Bangladesh, researchers (Blanchet, 1996: 14-15; White, 2002a: 731) stress the significance of age along with other social differentiations and valuations such as sex, gender, birth order, class, caste, religion, lineage including honour and reputation that greatly shape conception of personhood. In discussing choice in child labour migration in rural Bangladesh, Heissler (2009) shows that there are two important aspects of being moral by maintaining honour and avoiding shame. These are: deference to adults through obedience and respect, and maintaining *purdah*. Both these aspects of morality are highly valued in Bangladesh which greatly contributes to shaping the agency and opportunities of children and young people to participate in decisions and the actual choices they make regarding participation and decisions.

Heissler's (2009; 2012: 506-507) study suggests that girls and boys are instructed especially about honour and shame around the time of puberty, which varies between genders. Girls experience stricter rules than boys in maintaining honour and shame through *purdah* which include not socialising with the opposite sex, and restriction of physical mobility outside the home. Heissler argues that especially girls' adherence to the system of honour and shame greatly shapes the choices of child labour migration in Bangladesh. Thus the notion of honour and shame acts as a social control to regulate female sexuality especially in rural Bangladesh, which constrains children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Thus, girls' and boys' adherence to the norms and values associated with honour and shame points to the powerful social structures that shape girls' and boys' interests and opportunities to influence individual choice in decision-making. It also shows that children and young people's contribution to the reproduction and maintenance of social structures that constrain them. Any resistance therefore can be observed in the case of challenging patriarchal norms by breaking *purdah*. For instance, the garment industry and

other areas of the labour market in Bangladesh facilitate female labour force participation and are also bringing about a major shift in the social and economic position of women.

Nevertheless, as Lewis (2011: 15) notes, resistance associated with challenging social norms of *purdah* can be attributed to the escalation of the phenomena of frequent dowry inflation, dowry deaths and acid-throwing attacks on girls and women in recent years in Bangladesh. Likewise, Kabeer's (2001) study of garment workers in Bangladesh shows that girls and women are seen as risking breaking *purdah* due to their engagement in paid work, especially outside their locality.

Similarly, Heissler's (2009) study in rural Bangladesh shows the consequences of breaking *purdah,* that girls who have 'crossed boundaries' by migrating to the city for work are socially excluded from returning home. The above examples reveal the highly gendered nature of children and young people's participation in decision-making. These examples also point to the norms of *purdah* as powerful social controls that structure girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decisions differently.

The experiences of gendered nature of honour and shame are also evident in cross-cultural research. For instance, in Ghana, parents prefer their daughters not to be away from home for extended periods due to fears that the daughters might engage in immoral behaviour, such as sex without marriage or getting pregnant, which negatively impacts on the status and honour of the girl as well as her family (Hashim, 2005 in Heissler, 2009).

The above discussions suggest that children and young people are embedded in relational contexts. Therefore, a social relations approach to childhood is useful to understand the intricacies in the experiences of children and young people's opportunities and constraints to participate in decision-making. Drawing on Kabeer (1999), in the following section I present the 'social relations approach' as an analytical framework to conceptualise, evaluate and analyse my research on children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

Social Relations Approach—an analytical framework

Kabeer (1999) describes social relations as the structural relationships that produce and reproduce systematic differences in people's differential positions. By producing cross-cutting inequalities, social relations attribute individual positions in the structure and

hierarchy of a society. The social relations approach is therefore a method to analyse existing inequalities in the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power.

Using concepts rather than tools, the social relations approach focuses on relationships between people, their relationships to resources and activities, and the way these relationships are determined by various institutions such as family, community and the state. Kabeer argues that there are certain commonalities in terms of values, norms and beliefs, which cut across institutions and cultures and cause widespread construction and reinforcement of various social inequalities such as gender, generation, ethnicity, caste, class and social identity.

According to Kabeer (1999: 14-15), institutions share five characteristics of social relations. First, institutional behaviours are rule-governed. Distinct institutional patterns of behaviour are therefore embedded in official or unofficial rules, in norms, values, traditions, laws and customs which constrain or enable what is done, how it is done, by whom, and who will benefit.

Second, institutional rules generate distinct patterns of activities to meet specific needs or to pursue specific goals. These activities can be productive, distributive or regulative. However, the rule-governed nature of institutional behaviour suggests that institutional practices become routinised and thereby reconstitute institutions. It is therefore important to investigate institutional practices as they reconstitute social inequality.

Third, institutional rules govern patterns of mobilisation and allocation of resources, which can be human in terms of labour, education and skills; material in the form of food, assets, land, money; and intangible such as information, political clout, goodwill, contacts and connections. Institutional resources can be used as inputs for institutional activity or they can represent institutional outputs.

Fourth, certain types of people can constitute institutions. Institutional rules and practices determine which categories of people are to be included or excluded, as well as their positioning within an institutional hierarchy which determines the allocation of resources and responsibilities.

Finally, power is one of the key characteristics of institutions, which is expressed through determining priorities and making the rules. Some institutional actors exercise authority

to interpret institutional priorities, needs and goals, and they are able to mobilise the loyalty, labour and compliance of others. The unequal distribution of responsibilities and resources within an organisation, which is supported by official and unofficial rules and ideologies, tends to ensure the authority of some institutional actors. Thus, power is formed as an integral part of institutions through norms, rules, and conventions, its allocations of resources and responsibilities, and its customs and practices (Kabeer, 1999: 14-15).

Similarly, in the Weberian conception power is viewed as being relational, in that social power exists in a certain relationship and is understood as an aspect of that relationship (Weber, 1972: 28, 531 in Poggy, 2001: 12). Social power relations are observed when individuals or groups, due to their access to control over resources, are able to set routine and enforceable boundaries on the activities of another individual or collective to deprive the latter of salient human values (Poggy, 2001: 14).

In discussing the connection between violence and ideology, Connell (1987: 107) points to the multiple character of this social power that acts as a social structure, as a pattern of constraint on social practice, and the role of institutions in exercising power. In this way institutional practice reflects the vested interests of actors who have the power to make as well as change rules in their own interests (Kabeer, 1999: 15). This relational understanding of power is crucial in understanding how a structure of power, a set of social relations between intergenerational and intra-generational positions, shapes the way children and young people experience their opportunities to influence decision-making in various social relations. In this regard, an understanding of the 'personalistic' and 'materialistic' (Patterson, 1982:18 in Heissler, 2009) dimensions of power is also useful for this thesis.

The 'personalistic' dimension of power concerns dependencies in relationships, for instance, power relations based on kinship or kin-like relations, such as between parents and children. Power relations in their materialistic form are disguised due to the less transparent nature of dependency relations, which concerns power over commodities rather than power over persons.

This perspective of power in its symbolic form (Bourdieu, 1991) is also useful in examining the nuances of power beyond economic power to understand the structural

constraints that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making. The reason for this is that symbolic orders—classifications, myths, and ideologies—play crucial roles in constructing social identities and in governing social practices. Accordingly, symbolic systems, social stratifications and identities based on gender, generation, caste, ethnicity, religion and social identity exert symbolic power and thus reproduce power relations within a culture and society. Such symbolic power is an aspect of most forms of power due to their routine deployment in social life (Bourdieu, 1991: 23).

Thus, power flows routinely in daily life through a symbolic form which gives it legitimacy. Bourdieu (1991) argues that due to its invisible nature, symbolic power is often misrecognised and thereby recognised as legitimate. The concepts of recognition and misrecognition have significance in that they stress the importance of shared belief that underlies the exercise of power through symbolic exchange. By tacitly acknowledging the legitimacy of power or the hierarchical power relations in which people in society are embedded, people within various institutions fail to conceptualise the arbitrary nature of such a hierarchy that privileges some groups over others.

Bourdieu further argues that in order to grasp the complexities of symbolic power and the way it functions, it is vital to understand the active complicity of those who are subjected to it. This understanding of symbolic power, active complicity and self-subjection is also useful for analysing the various ways in which children and young people actively participate in internalising social rules and norms and reconstructing the oppressive social structures that shape their experiences of participation in decisions. In this regard, Bourdieu's (1998) concept of habitus is useful in understanding the deployment of symbolic power and the way it creates contexts within which power plays out in shaping children and young people's agency and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in decisions.

According to Bourdieu, '[h]abitus are generative principles of distinct practices' (1998). Habitus thus refers to a set of dispositions that make individuals behave, act and react in particular ways (Thompson, 1991:12). These dispositions routinely generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which naturalise the social roles of the individual without their being aware of it. The dispositions that constitute habitus have distinct characteristics in

that they are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable. Habitus underscores the significance of social contexts or settings in generating social practices.

Therefore, certain practices or perceptions are considered as the outcome of the relation between habitus and the particular social contexts in which individuals find themselves (Bourdieu, 1991; Thompson, 1991: 12-14). Bourdieu's (1977: 76) conceptualisation of habitus 'as a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures' is thus useful to delineate various processes in the production of identities and subjectivities among children and young people in shaping their experiences of participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

Therefore, deconstructing institutional practices through the characteristics of rules, activities, resources, people, and power is useful for this thesis to examine both intergenerational and intra-generational relationships and the way they influence children and young people's agency and experiences of participation in decisions. In the following paragraphs, I outline the key arguments in the literature regarding the significance of analysing sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes that shape children and young people's agency and participation in decision-making. I will conclude this discussion by drawing on the relevance of using a social relations approach in investigating various individual and social processes regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making that affect their lives.

There are two factors that are salient in shaping children and young people's participation in decision-making (Mayall, 2012: 348). First, children and young people's status and position from social, cultural, religious economic and political perspectives play a particular role in shaping childhood experiences in a society. Second, large-scale forces including policies, premised on ideologies, established services and practices leave specific ways of impacting upon particular social groups. Therefore, policy analyses must reveal the processes through which social, cultural, economic, and political arrangements systematically undermine social solidarity by devaluing certain individuals and groups such as children and young people in exercising their agency (Jones and Welch, 2010: 18).

Childhood studies reveal an abundance of empirical evidence of children and young people's exercise of agency in constrained contexts (For instance, Beazley, 2003; Punch,

2007; Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2013b; Balagopalan, 2014; Punch, 2015) and point to the wider field of power within which children and young people live (Lee, 2001; Prout, 2005: 62; Ansell, 2009; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Holt, 2011; Prout, 2011; Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 251; van Blerk, 2012: 321; Jensen, 2014). These studies therefore suggest to question and problematise the meaning of agency for different groups of children and young people (Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 255).

Stressing the importance of teasing out the meaning of agency for different groups of children and young people in different contexts, researchers point to misunderstandings, ambiguities and difficulties in resolving and interpreting while children and young people participate due to their multiple social positions within intergenerational and intra-generational relationships (Mayall and Zeiher, 2003; James, 2009: 43; Cockburn, 2013: 222). Considering that children's position within various inter-generational and intra-generational positions offer different opportunities and constraints in exercising their agency in decision-making, it is important to problematise children and young people's agency in constrained contexts. A discussion of a continuum of agency is instructive here, which varies based on favourable and constrained contexts, created and expected roles and identities, positions of power and powerlessness, stage in life course and state of emotion and wellbeing (Robson et al., 2007a; Robson et al., 2007b).

Similarly, Klocker's (2007) conceptualisation of thick and thin agency is helpful in understanding the continuum of children and young people's constrained agency in varied contexts. According to Klocker, agency can be defined as thin or thick depending on the context that either facilitates or constrains agency. Thin agency refers to everyday actions and decision-making within highly restrictive contexts, characterised by few viable alternatives. Thick agency on the other hand offers freedom to act within a wide range of choices. Therefore, agency can be thickened or thinned over time and space and across their various positions within social relations. Here, structures, contexts and relationships act as catalyst for individual agency being thick or thin by constraining or expanding their alternative choices.

For instance, in the context of children's role in collective livelihood strategies in rural Ethiopia, Abebe's (2013) conceptualisation of interdependent agency focuses on the interrelatedness of rights, duties and obligations and exposes the multidimensionality of children's agency and the socio-personal and spatial context that shapes such agency.

Drawing on cross-cultural studies, Tisdall and Punch (2012: 256) therefore urge to recognise the tension between children and young people's exercise of agency and their position of vulnerably in various social relations. This relational understanding points to consider emphasising the structural analysis to underscore the importance of analysing macro factors in children and young people's exercise of agency in decision-making (Mayall, 2012).

Similarly, in order to understand the complexities of participation and voice, it is crucial to tease out the micro factors such as the nature of child-adult as well as child-child social relations to understand the power and social control within such relationships. Therefore, it is equally important to investigate the processes of negotiation between children, young people and adults and between children themselves (Bjerke, 2011b; Wyness, 2012). This relational understanding of children and young people's participation in decision-making necessitates us to focus on the role of adults as collaborators and partners and thereby on the interdependent relationships between children, young people and adults. Moreover, there is a need to pay greater attention to recognising the real vulnerability of the external environment in which children and young people live (Pells, 2012: 435) that also limits their agency and opportunities to participate in decisions.

Therefore, it is significant to investigate the private associative processes, such as children and young people's interactions within and between families, friends, associates, schools and neighbourhoods (Cockburn, 2013: 223). Stressing the importance of context, the critical thought recognises the relational nature of human performance and thereby to consider sociocultural and economic context to measure human performance, such as participation (Freire, 1998: 62; Thomas, 2012b: 158).

Thus, children and young people's participation in decision-making can be facilitated in their interactions with adults and peers (Baraldi, 2008). Family background and relationships with peers, schools and neighbourhood are crucial in the way an individual acts and reacts in the community and civil society. Therefore, it is important to identify and analyse networks of power within practices in children and young people's lives at home, in schools, community and politics (Cockburn, 2013: 223). This relational understanding implies to have a broader understanding of the processes through which certain groups such as children and young people are represented.

For instance, Fraser and Honneth (2003: 352) propose specific suggestions to help analyse how groups such as children and young people experience disrespect which constitutes a central principle of social justice. In order to examine how children and young people experience exclusion due to disrespect, first, there is a need to pay particular attention to how the institutional context of social structures distributes resources. Second, analytical attention needs to be extended to non-material social goods, such as deference, respect and recognition.

Moreover, it is equally important to explore the processed, dynamic and historical nature of social and power relations between groups. Thus, it is crucial to analyse how the structures of childhood or adulthood are produced. In order to understand how childhood or adulthood is produced, it is necessary to pay attention to everyday practices of child-adult relations as well as relation between the relations. For instance, the interactive practices of child-adult relations (Alanen, 2001), which are based on obedience and authority in Bangladesh and in many countries in the Global South, ultimately shape the child-adult social positions. Investigating and analysing the relational processes of child-adult interactions and social relations are important to understand the meanings through which childhood and adulthood and their interrelationships are produced and become culturally meaningful (Alanen, 2009: 169; Cockburn, 2013: 184-185).

As already highlighted above, like other inequalities, it is vital to carry out the structural analyses of macro factors that constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making (Hart, 2008a; Mayall, 2012: 348; Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 256; van Blerk, 2012: 322). This need has increasingly been evident in the recent call by childhood researchers to position children and young people within political economy (see for instance, Morrow, 2012: 3, 5-6; 2013b).

Researchers therefore stress the importance of considering the broader social forces of both material poverty and other inequalities in analyses of children and young people's exclusion from influencing major decisions (Horton and Kraftl, 2006; Thomas, 2012b: 159; Tisdall and Punch, 2012; Abebe, 2013: 73). The recent critical theoretical reflection on children and young people's lives within the context of large-scale socioeconomic processes points to the greater significance of exploring how children and young people's everyday experiences as part of families, friendships, communities and wider societal networks are shaped by particular powerful relational processes and connected to wider

sociocultural and politicoeconomic influences (Punch, 2002b, 2007; Balagopalan, 2011: 295; van Blerk, 2012: 322).

Given the significance discussed above, there is a greater need to systematically deconstructing structures or various institutional contexts to investigate how resources, responsibilities and power are distributed across and between generations within various institutions. Inequalities that exclude children and young people from influencing decision-making not only exist between adults and children but also between children and young people themselves.

The objective of deconstructing institutions is thus to unveil the processes through which both inter-and intra-generations and their intersections with social structures such as gender, generation, class, ethnicity, caste and other social differentiations produce, reproduce and maintain inequalities (Cockburn, 2013: 185) that exclude children and young people from influencing decision-making. A social relations approach to deconstruct institutions is therefore necessary for my thesis to understand the location of power from which children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making unfold or get obstructed.

Conclusions

This research focuses on children and young people's participation in decision-making which is shaped by structuring factors and institutions of sociocultural and politicoeconomic forces. A review of existing literature including theories, concepts and models on children and young people's participation challenges the prevailing assumptions about the individual rights-bearing participating child. This includes assumptions about what is meant by participation, who can participate and what are the key structuring factors that shape children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making.

There are two competing visions of children and young people's participation in decision-making: one that is viewed as social relations while the other is viewed in terms of political relations. A number of debates regarding children and young people's participation are centred on authenticity in participation through seeking unmediated voices, the receding role of adults, and unitary voice and thereby the lack of representation in analyses of children and young people's participation.

Another key criticism is that participation is viewed as preparation for future citizenship rather than recognition of children and young people's contribution in the present. Moreover, the practice of using incremental age and competency as the key to offering certain opportunities for older young people's participation, especially in collective decision-making, raises questions of representation of children and young people from diverse ages and backgrounds.

The prevailing literature of children and young people's participation in decision-making including examples from Bangladesh suggests that a number of key values such as security, tradition, conformity and power influence children and young people's opportunities and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in decision-making. These norms and values are reflected through practices of reciprocity, interdependence, deference, and adherence to honour and avoiding shame.

Children and young people's strong sense of duty, obligation and reciprocity towards their families suggests that children and young people are embedded in intergenerational interdependence. Such interdependence between generations reveals the tension between children and young people's adherence to social values to act morally and their right to participate in making decisions that affect their lives. It also reveals the tension between adult responsibilities for children's protection and children's opportunities to participate in decision-making. The analysis points to children and young people's real vulnerability in the external environment, associated with risk and danger that limits children and young people's agency. It also shows the power of sociocultural and politicoeconomic factors that shape generational relationships between child-adult and between peers.

Moreover, the power of social control through notions of honour and shame exert considerable influence over children and young people's experience of participation, affecting older girls more than older boys. This understanding of children and young people's embeddedness in relational contexts necessitates taking a social relations approach as an analytical framework to investigate and analyse the sources of power from which children and young people's participation in decision-making occurs or does not occur.

Briefly, understanding the overall contexts in which children and young people live is vital in understanding children and young people's participation in individual as well as

collective decision-making. There have been some instances in the literature of investigating children and young people's participation in public spaces such as in youth councils or formal decisions-making processes globally. Greater investigation has to be done into children and young people's experiences of participation, especially in the private spaces of home, at semi-private spaces in school, between peers, with service providers and employers, and in politics.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand children and young people's participatory experiences within various social positions in intergenerational and intra-generational relationships and within the spaces of family, society and the state. Further, an emphasis on the exclusive viewpoints of children and young people in analyses of children and young people's participation implies that vital aspects of the views of adults regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making are overlooked.

Given the significance outlined in this chapter, this current study provides hard empirical evidence to evaluate the prevailing assumptions behind children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh. The present study also offers an explanation of why and how children and young people's participation in decision-making is constrained and/or enabled. It also shows the power of the processes and structures that influence girls' and boys' experiences of participation differently and the contexts in which children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decisions are shaped through interactions with adults and with peers. This study thus contributes to emerging debates regarding the limitations to children and young people's participation in decision-making due to sociocultural and politicoeconomic structures, particularly within developing country contexts. The next Chapter describes how I carried out this study: approach, methods and methodology including ethical research with children and young people in Bangladesh.

Chapter 3 Rights-based, children and young people-centred research: approach, methods and ethics

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. I first give an overview of my research followed by discussion about the research design that I undertook, which is rights-based and children and young people-centred research and thereby children-centred research. I then discuss the participatory approach and qualitative methods I employed to gather information about the subjective experiences of young people and adults that helped me address my research questions. In doing this, I draw on insights from the social relations approach (Kabeer, 1999) that I introduced in Chapter Two of this thesis as an analytic concept. The relational idea of social relations significantly shaped my research methodology in a number of ways.

First, the relational nature of children and young people's position in society led me to collect information from both young people and adults who occupied various social positions such as children and parents, students and teachers, young workers and employers, young service users and service providers and policy planners.

Second, considering that sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts are important for understanding opportunities, choice and decision-making (Heissler, 2009; Mayall, 2012: 348; Abebe, 2013), I deconstructed and analysed various institutions as relational spaces, including families, schools, NGOs and the government. Such deconstruction and analysis of different relational contexts enabled me to reveal how the intertwining complexities of structural inequalities such as generation, gender, class, birth order, ethnicity, caste, social and birth identity, parental education and employment status, and geographic location cross-cut each other through the interactions of different social institutions and thereby produce specific disadvantages for young people that constrain their agency and opportunities to participate in both personal and collective level decision-making.

Finally, an examination of various formal and informal rules, norms, values, traditions, customs and laws that act as sources of power has helped me to evaluate institutional practices that underlie beliefs, strategies and constraints that shape human behaviour (Francis, 1993; Heissler, 2009). Following this, I explain my rationale behind employing

rights-based research that necessitated me to undertake a participatory approach (see also, Westwood et al., 2014) and multiple methods of qualitative and some quantitative tools including ethical consideration as my research strategy. I conclude the chapter by discussing how I addressed the ethical issues generated within the field and how that shaped my data and analysis. [1]

Overview of the study

I carried out this field work for nine months (July 2007 to March 2008) in a semi-rural district called Tangail and at national level in Bangladesh. The reason for selecting Tangail as my field site was the existence of a network of young people's organisations called 'Children's Council', which involved around 100,000 children and young people, aged 6 to 17, between 1995 and 2010. I received support for conducting my field work with the Children's Council spread over five sub-districts of Tangail from an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) where I had worked as the Deputy Country Director before I started my doctoral studies.

Tangail district is in central region of Bangladesh, which is about 100 kilometres away from the capital city Dhaka. The total geographic area of Tangail district is 3414.35 square kilometres of which 497.27 square kilometres are under forest. The area of Tangail town is 35.22 square kilometres. The district consists of 12 upazilas (sub-districts), 110 unions[2], 1855 mauzas[3], 2439 villages, 11 paurashavas, 108 wards and 245 mahallas.[4] The economy of Tangail is predominantly agricultural. About 49.53 percent people live on agricultural activities. Out of total 801,637 holdings of the district, 62.50% holdings are farms and remaining 37.50% are non- farms, which are also significant for livelihood in this region. Besides the crops, livestock, forestry and fishery are the major sources of household income in Tangail (BBS, 2013a; GOB, 2015b). Compared to the national

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[1] A full account of the ethical discussion in this chapter was published as follows: AHSAN, M. 2009, 'The potential and challenges of rights-based research with children and young people: experiences from Bangladesh', *Children's Geographies*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 391 - 403.

[2]Union is the smallest administrative rural geographic unit comprising of mauzas and villages and having union parishad institution.

[3] Mauza is the lowest administrative unit having a separate jurisdiction list number record in revenue records.

[4] Mahalla is the lowest urban geographic unit having identifiable boundaries.

statistics of adolescent population (aged 10 to 19 years) currently married in Bangladesh, two percent male and 45 percent female, the record is quite significantly higher in Tangail (UNICEF, 2015: 96). According to the Tangail District Statistics 2011, 65.2 percent male and 70.3 percent female of 10 years and above in Tangail are currently married (BBS, 2013a: 21).

Total population in Tangail is about 3,605,083. Although Tangail is advanced in terms of educational achievement compared to other districts of the country (GOB, 2015a), its literacy rate, which is 46.80 percent, male 50 percent and female 43.80 percent, is lagging behind the national literacy rate of 61 percent (BBS, 2013a: 20; GOB, 2015a). Moreover, mirroring the lower literacy rate for female at national level, female literacy rate in Tangail is also lower than that of male. There are 1477 primary schools, 559 high schools and 59 colleges in Tangail (GOB, 2015b).

Compared to national statistics of 35 percent students who passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in 2005 (Ahmed et al., 2007), the rate for successful completion of SSC examination is 87.39 percent in 2013 in Tangail (GOB, 2015a). The highest students per teacher ratio in government primary schools in Tangail is as high as 1:70 (BBS, 2013a: 75) compared to the national average of 1:66 (Ahmed et al., 2007: 36). The Education Watch Survey 2004 shows substantial variation in students per teacher ratio ranging from 37 to 90 students per teacher for government primary schools in 10 sub-districts in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2007: 36). The ratio of students per teacher is less in kindergarten schools (pre-schooling) which is 1:22 and in NGO schools is 1:34 compared to government primary schools which is 1:50 in Tangail (SCA, 2011; BBS, 2013a: 77).

I chose to associate with the INGO to get access to the community through its seven partner community-based organisations (CBOs) in Tangail. Some of the research meetings I conducted were carried out at the training centre of the INGO field office at Tangail where I lived during the first seven months of my field work. Moreover, my choice of associating myself with the INGO was also due to my intention to investigate two more young people's networks at national level managed by the INGO.

Research area

I investigated social attitudes, values, beliefs, views, experiences, customs, rules and practices of both young people and adults in various social positions and between peers. The social relations between children, young people and adults in various positions studied are: child-parent; student-teacher; working young people-employer; young people-service provider; and young people-policy planner relationships. Around 607 participants participated in this study. Of them, a total of 354 young people (158 girls and 196 boys, aged 12 to 17 years) and 253 adults participated in this study.

I accessed the research participants primarily through seven CBOs and later through participating young people and adults using a snowball technique. The young participants included members and non-members of the Children's Council in Tangail district and five sub-districts, students from four secondary schools, one higher secondary *Madrasha* (religious educational institution), and one higher secondary college; young people working as domestics, motor garage apprentices and working in a local cigarette (*bidi*) factory; young people of ethnic and religious minorities; orphaned young people growing up in two government-run residential care homes; young people from a brothel growing up in an NGO-run residential care home; young people from a sweeper community; and young people from a brothel community in Tangail.

It is significant to note that the stigma attached to the occupation of sweeping makes the sweeper community socially excluded and marginalised. The sweeping caste is considered as untouchable in the Hindu vision of personal pollution. In Hindu customs, female purity is carefully guarded to preserve the hierarchy of the caste system (Douglas, 1966). Like the sweeper community the brothel community is also socially excluded, but due to stigma attached to immorality of prostitution. The brothel community is ostracised by society and experiences social sanctions and exclusion. The sweeper and brothel communities are located next to each other on the outskirts of Tangail city.

Due to the untouchable caste status of the sweeper community and the immoral status of the brothel community, the social mobility of the people of both these communities is strictly restricted, especially that of the brothel community. Following the country's broader sociocultural practice, there is a gender dimension of seclusion of these two communities. Women and girls experience greater restriction and social sanction than men and boys do.

Besides the above young people, young people involved in the National Children's Task Force, the country-wide young people's network, and from the National Children's Parliament, the national-level representative forum for young people, also participated in this research at the later stage of my field work.

The adults participants involved parents, secondary, higher secondary and tertiary-level school, college, and university teachers, *madrasha* teachers, community leaders, staff from local, national and International Non-Government Organisations, journalists, lawyers, local and national government officials and staff from seven international child rights organisations operating in Bangladesh. All the names used in this study are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the research participants.

I employed rights-based, children-centred research to answer the following research question: Why is children and young people's participation in decision-making yet to be practiced in Bangladesh? The above question is further broken down into the following specific questions to guide me to investigate individual and social processes and structures that constrain and/ or enable young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making in both private and in public spaces.

1. How is children and young people's participation conceptualised in Bangladesh?
2. To what extent are children and young people able to participate in decisions in families, schools, community, I/NGOs and in the government that affect their lives in Bangladesh?
3. What are the factors that constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh?
4. What are the factors that enable children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh?

Participatory approach: framework for rights-based, children and young people-centred research

In this section I discuss rights-based and children and young people-centred research, as well as the rationale, and the implications for adopting such an approach in my research. The core of rights-based research with children and young people is to respect and realise children and young people's human rights in the research process and its outcomes within the broader framework of the UNCRC and the new sociology of childhood that views children and young people as social actors (James and Prout, 1997). This theoretical and conceptual lens emphasises the way in which children and young people's social representation, as rights bearers and social actors, have implications for choice of research methodology, as this lens recognises children and young people's agency, respect for their rights, dignity and worth (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Bessell, 2011a).

Therefore, the rights framework recognises children and young people as active participants by placing children and young people at the centre of the research process and allows their own accounts in data collection (James and Prout, 1997; James et al., 1998). Consequently, this conceptualisation of children and young people led me to adopt the philosophy of a rights-based framework that recognises children and young people as research participants and co-constructors of knowledge (Christensen and James, 2008b) and thereby to respect and realise children and young people's human rights through my research processes and outcomes. Although rights-based research has the potential to generate tension at community level, I chose to do it due to my personal and professional commitment to ethical research through upholding children and young people's human rights while carefully recognising, valuing and respecting the context in which children and young people are embedded (see also, Abebe and Bessell, 2014: 132).

Drawing upon the principles of UNCRC, Beazley and colleagues (2006) offered an overarching framework of rights-based research with children and young people. There are four key concepts underlying this rights-based approach. First, that the idea of children and young people's right to express their views on matters affecting children and young people's lives should receive paramount consideration in research objectives (Article 12 of the UNCRC).

Second, there is acknowledgement and respect for the idea that children and young people may prefer different forms of expression than adults do (Article 13 of the UNCRC). Third, there is the notion that children and young people have the right to receive high-quality services (Article 3.3 of the UNCRC), which includes sound and high-quality academic research. Finally, the belief that children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of exploitation (Article 36 of the UNCRC), including through research processes and dissemination of information (Bessell, 2011a).

In addition, I would add that children and young people have the right to enjoy rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activity (Article 31 of the UNCRC), which can be extended in the research context to make the research experience positive and enjoyable for children and young people. Besides this, there are a number of Articles of the UNCRC that explicitly support the above core concepts of rights-based research with children and young people.

Therefore, the recognition and emphasis of agency, voice and participation in the paradigms that represent children and young people as rights bearers and social actors lead to the idea that social enquiry should be *with* rather than *on* or *for* children and young people (Hunleth, 2011: 81-82). The reason is that this way of conceptualisation has the potential to recognise, realise and record children and young people's agency (James et al., 1998; Bessell, 2006a: 2; Christensen and James, 2008a).

The above conceptualisation of research with children and young people implies that researchers must capture children and young people's accounts from the point of view of children and young people themselves. This means that researchers have to consider the following issues in research processes with children and young people: taking children and young people as the unit of observation and childhood as the unit of analysis; placing children and young people at the heart of the research and employing methods that take

account of children and young people's relative powerlessness in society; considering children and young people's different use of and understanding of words; and children and young people's relative lack of experiences (Boyden and Ennew, 1997: 58).

There are two possible ways through which children and young people's voices can be placed at the centre of any research: first, by employing participatory research methods and, second, by considering ethical principles in the research process and its outcomes (Bessell, 2006a). Therefore, in order to do ethical research, researchers need to employ a methodology that places children and young people at the heart of the research process. As Christensen and James (2008e: 3) argue, research with children and young people necessitates a re-examination of the conceptual frameworks that influence representation and participation of children and young people. Hence, children-centred research informed by principles of children and young people's human rights and the new sociology of childhood has the potential to place children and young people's views and experiences centrally in research (Bessell, 2006a: 4).

Children-centred research loosely covers methods, stages or levels of children and young people's involvement in research processes to bring children into the foreground to properly understand children and young people's lives (Boyden and Ennew, 1997: 11; Sutherland and Young, 2014: 367). Bessell (2013: 12) outlines children-centred research as 'ensuring children are able to (and are supported to) participate on their own terms, while respecting their human rights, dignity and agency within the research process'. Thus, children-centred research has two specific implications.

First, it employs methods based on the principles of a rights framework that respects children and young people's position-specific knowledge and experiences. Second, it recognises children's embeddedness in families, communities and states and thereby takes a relational view of children and young people's social position. Given this, I now discuss how my choice of taking a participatory approach to research and the idea of social relations shaped my methodology in carrying out this research with young people and also with adults.

My consideration of children and young people as rights bearers and as differently competent social actors (James, 1995) led me to choose a variety of qualitative methods to recognise individual young people's agency. I therefore employed a range of

participatory research tools including task-based activities such as worksheets, pie charts, problem trees, drawings and diary writing. I also applied conventional research techniques including semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, workshop-style discussions and questionnaires survey. My objective in adopting participatory approaches was to position young people at the centre of my research process and to address power relationships between myself and the young people involved in my research.

As per its ideological stance, participatory research emphasises generating knowledge from the perspective of the research participants rather than the researcher (Beazley and Ennew, 2006: 191). In the context of development, the participatory approach promotes community involvement in decision-making processes that affect people's lives, as developed by Robert Chambers and associates (1994, 1997). The location of power in the research process makes participatory social research different from conventional social research.

Therefore, the defining characteristic of participatory research is the level and degree of engagement of participants in research rather than on particular methods and techniques employed. The key principles that underlie this participatory research approach are thus to reduce and circumvent the power relations inherent in research relationships and to give voice to those researched to take an active role in every stage of the research process, from defining research problems to data generation, analysis, dissemination and action (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Kesby, 2005: 2037; Beazley and Ennew, 2006: 191).

However, it is equally argued that there are practical limitations to enabling research participants to take an active role in data analysis, dissemination and action such as in this type of research. In the context of childhood studies, participatory research methods enable children and young people to represent their subjective life experiences (Nieuwenhuys, 1997; Bourdillion, 2004; Abebe, 2008a). By redistributing power and establishing more reciprocal relationships, participatory approaches thus tend to develop the capacity of children and young people to analyse and transform their situations and thereby offer a practical means for empowerment (Kesby, 2005: 2037).

Yet, despite with using careful methods and best intentions, considerable inequalities in power relations remained that had impacted on my research processes and outcomes

(Ahsan, 2009; see also, Raffety, 2014; Spyrou, 2015). In this regard, my positionality as a young, female Bangladeshi, speaking the majority language, observing the majority religion, and being privileged due to my upper middle class background with prolonged development experience in international donor organisation turned out to be both advantageous as well as disadvantageous.

On the one hand, compared to an outsider researcher with foreign origin I had greater access and acceptance to the community and necessary resources. Moreover, I had better understanding of the issues and phenomena investigated, and was able to bring in greater insights into my analysis. Yet, I consciously engaged myself in complex thinking about my positionality in every stage of my research process from research setting to data analysis and thesis writing (see also, Fontana and Frey, 2005; Chawla-Duggan et al., 2012; Cumming-Potvin, 2013: 218-219; Berger, 2015: 220; Roer-Strier and Sands, 2015: 252). Such reflexivity significantly helped me to approach research and power relations including ensuring the level of young people's engagement, the generation of knowledge about the research phenomena, the negotiation of ethics as collaborative and situational (Skovdal and Abebe, 2012: 77) and the rigour in analysis.

On the other hand, due to strong socialisation of the young people to be respectful and obedient to adults coupled with my privileged background meant that I was not always successful in establishing a symmetrical relationship with my young participants (Ahsan, 2009). For instance, some of the participants accepted the research tools without any questioning but were too intimidated to be able to engage in research. Similarly, without informed consent the CBOs made some young people participating in my research because of my previous practitioner identity with a donor organisation. Likewise, being a member of the majority and dominant group, I expected that the young people from one ethnic minority and one caste minority would be able to communicate with me in the majority language, Bangla.

However, despite the popular view that power mostly resides with the adult researchers (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008), there has been a growing call by researchers to view power as more fluid in research relationships (Gallagher, 2008; Roer-Strier and Sands, 2015: 253). For instance, being a native young female, my attempts to take on the role of a friendly adult enabled some young people exercised greater control over me and the research process by appropriating the participatory research techniques in their own

interests (Ahsan, 2009). Likewise, despite my effort to set ground rules by the participating young people themselves, the older, articulate and particularly male young advisory group members tended to be more dominant in the advisory group activities than the younger, less articulate and female members.

In order to make my research both inclusive and participatory, I sought the help of a group of young people who acted as an advisory group to map out the prospective research participants. The advisory group ranked various secondary schools in Tangail based on academic performance, geographical location and representation of diverse groups of young people through which I chose five types of school. In addition, with the help of the advisory group, I identified young people from representative groups in Tangail including members of the Children's Council, secondary schools, *madrasha* and college students, an educational coaching centre, working young people as domestic helpers, motor garage apprentices and child sex workers, young people representing ethnic and religious minorities, young people growing up in two government and one NGO-run residential cares homes, in the sweeper community, and in a brothel.

Although I had to define the research questions, the methods I used enabled young people to identify, define, and prioritise many issues relating to their concerns and suggested possible solutions. Therefore, although young people were not involved in designing the original questionnaires or identifying tools for this research, the interview and focus-group guides and survey questionnaires I finally used were moderately refined by young people's active input. A small scale pilot study helped me to ground my research in the perspectives of young people.

For example, young people could easily pick up the ambiguity of terminologies or words I used from translating the English questions into Bangla, and suggested simple words, terminologies or ways to put the idea differently. In Bangla, the word 'child' means 'infant' and in no way refers to a wide range of age groups. Finally, it was agreed that I would use the term 'boys-girls', which is generally used to mean 'children and young people' in Bangladesh and this worked well.

Similarly, young people helped me to deconstruct the idea of participation in a way understandable to young people themselves. For instance, I presented the concept of participation to the young people participated in this research in the following way so that

young people could easily relate to their experiences: 'when a particular decision is made about you at home or in school for example, can you express your opinion or can you have your say, and do they consider that'? This way of breaking the idea of participation helped translate the meaning of this abstract concept to young people. As such, young people were able to see the relevance of the concept of participation in their lives.

In order to ensure young people's choices over particular methods and instruments, I pre-tested all the question schedules with a representative group of young people. Thus, I was able to make necessary adjustments and ensured that the research topics and questions were relevant to young people's own concerns, priorities and agendas, and the appropriateness of methods, tools, and words of questions. Other researchers also suggest the benefit and importance of involving research participants in various research processes to yield good data. For instance, Hill (2006: 80) showed that consultation with children and young people in health services attracted a good response due to their engagement in setting the questionnaire together.

In order to engage children and young people effectively in research processes, researchers (James, 1995; Tisdall, 2012) point to the advantage of using various communication techniques such as drawings, stories and activities that children and young people easily relate to their experiences of doing and find easy and fun. Therefore, I kept provision for a set of research instruments for communication to be creative and flexible enough to meet individual young people's needs and preferences (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998: 342). This provision helped young people in shaping the research agenda and offered them greater control of the research process. It also enabled the young people to discuss and relate their experiences of complex and abstract issues such as participation in decision-making processes by interpreting social structures and relationships that shaped young people's experiences of participation.

For instance, unlike the younger participants, the older young participants did not show much interest in drawing exercise. Instead, the older participants were more interested in individual and focus-group discussions and often reflected on sociocultural and political analysis of the research phenomena in their discussions. The younger participants generally enjoyed not only drawing exercise but also brought their analysis in writing around the drawing. So, I let the participants choose tools as they felt most comfortable with and enjoyable. Besides, I welcomed young people's suggestions of modifying tools

during the exercise. For instance, instead of using the participation pie chart that I introduced for only recording their individual participation status, some young people choose to record their daily decision-making status as accurately as possible individually as well as in group and also came up with 'My 24 hour' status in pie chart, which offered greater insights and more nuanced view of the phenomena under investigation. Similarly, some adolescent female participants in rural setting refused to use drama as a research tool considering that it would ruin their reputation. Instead, they preferred to spend time talking to me informally in their courtyard and away from adult gaze. This change of using tool yielded rich data.

Likewise, the older young participants, mostly the Children's Council leaders, who participated in using 'participation problem tree' suggested that the time for this exercise should be extended up to four to five hours over a number of sessions so that the participants had enough time and space to debate and discuss the issues at length in group. So, instead of introducing this tool to every group and as a short time-bound exercise I introduced this tool to only a few selected groups who were able to participate in my research by staying with me in the training centre for at least three days and on a number of occasions. The extended time and relaxed setting enabled the participants to have extensive discussions among group members as well as with me, which resulted in very rich data. Therefore, my attempt to offer young people the freedom to choose in their own term, to use the tools that they felt most comfortable and to appreciate and accommodate young people's styles of communication (see also, Grover, 2004: 90) enabled young people to have some control over the research processes and outcomes.

Despite its largely positive evaluation, there are debates and critiques over participatory approaches (see for instance, Chambers, 1994, 1997; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Kesby, 2005; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). The main critiques of participatory approaches are centred on issues of rigour, reflexivity, and validity. There are arguments that even well-intentioned and well-executed participatory projects fail to achieve their key principles of equality, sustainability and empowerment of the marginalised. Besides, the underlying relations of power of participatory structures may in fact strengthen rather than reverse traditional power relations in the research process. Thus, participatory initiatives have been criticised for ignoring very real constraints to people in exercising their agency. Although it was not possible for me to address all limitations, they were addressed to the

extent possible by using ethical research and carefully designed research methods, which I discuss in the following paragraphs in this chapter.

Apart from participatory approaches to research, my research methodology was also greatly shaped by the idea of social relations, the conceptual framework I introduced in Chapter Two of this thesis. This framework helped me to investigate how young people are firmly embedded in both direct and indirect, invisible relationships in structured sets of relations in various institutions (Alanen, 2000: 304). Taking a social relations approach (Kabeer, 1999) therefore enabled me to explore structures and processes that either enabled or constrained young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives in their families, schools, community, I/NGOs and the government.

As discussed above, I employed rights-based research with young people, which offers a children-centred methodology based on the principles of children and young people's human rights, with distinct characteristics of employing more than one method in a participatory way and ethical principles in the research processes and its outcomes. The children-centred methodology that I applied was also shaped by taking a relational approach in placing young people's perspectives and experiences along with adults' at the heart of the research processes and its outcomes.

In the following sections I discuss the multiple methods I employed and the ethical challenges I addressed in carrying out this research.

Multiple methods as a successful research strategy

The advantages of using multiple methods in a flexible way over any single method have been well established in childhood research (Punch, 2002a; Barker and Weller, 2003; Bushin, 2007; Langevang, 2007; Morrow, 2008; O'Kane, 2008). Like adults, children and young people have different ways of and preferences for articulating their views. That is, although methods traditionally preferred for adults, e.g. surveys or one-on-one interviews, may be equally applicable to children and young people, Hoffmann-Ekstein et al. (2008) observe that a number of creative, oral and visual methods exemplified through writing, speaking and drawing can offer far greater advantages in engaging with children and young people's varied skills and preferences. As well as being more enjoyable for

children and young people, these activities can tap into and build upon children and young people's diverse skills and competencies, and address power inequalities that exist in research relations.

In this section, I discuss the methods I used to engage with young people's different skills, competencies and preferences, and the advantages and limitations of those methods. I also will discuss methods that I used with both young people and adults.

The participation matrix

The purpose of the participation matrix (Annex three) I carried out with five groups of young people and one group of adults was to explore physical, personal, social and political spaces where decisions are made about children and young people, the types of decisions made, the key decision-makers, and children, young people's and adults' attitudes towards participation, desire for and opportunities for participation in decision-making. This type of exercise enabled me to identify the key relationships in which children and young people are embedded in institutional practices regarding decision-making, and children and young people's actual experiences of participation in making decisions. Similarly, the structure of the matrix helped young people and adults to easily capture different institutional settings, practices and young people's subjective experiences of participation in decision-making in respective settings.

At first, the participants were invited to a discussion session to explore a possible list of spaces as relational contexts where decisions are made about children and young people. Then the spaces were grouped into homogeneous types such as educational institutional settings that involved schools, colleges, kindergartens, coaching centres and *madrasha*. Similarly, other settings included home, community, CBOs, INGOs, institutional care centres, young people's network organisations, young people's work places, and local and national government. The institutional settings were then distributed among a small group of an average of six to eight young people to complete a matrix exercise on each of the identified settings.

This activity involved young people working on a big flip chart, divided into six columns. Along the top axis of the column questions that I designed were asked to explore the types of decisions made about children and young people and who usually makes the decisions. Corresponding to the first column, by using appropriate symbols, the next four columns

asked participants to rank the most to the least important decisions in children and young people's lives, children and young people's opportunity, interest in, and attitudes towards, participation.

Once the exercise was completed, the worksheet offered an excellent visual stimulus for young people to initiate dialogue on a more abstract level regarding the processes of participation and to pursue the topic of why and how children and young people' s participation was inhibited or facilitated. Even the quietest young people could engage themselves in conversations to relate their experiences with the worksheet findings. Other than enabling discussion, identifying types of decisions corresponding to children and young people's participation led to specific exploration of children and young people's levels of participation, which varied between children and young people themselves intersected by gender, generation, class, ability, social identity, ethnicity, parental status, and location.

Therefore, the matrix exercise acted as a powerful tool to engage young people in an extended and meaningful dialogue around children and young people's participation in decision-making issues. In terms of its usefulness, I compared and contrasted young people's findings with the findings from similar exercises with a group of adults, which offered far greater insights into various structural and institutional processes regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The matrix exercise needs private, non-interrupted and spacious settings with some basic facilities such as whiteboard, display board, markers, (VIPP) cards and flip charts. Carrying out the matrix is a time consuming exercise. Young people took an average of four to five hours to work on only one institutional setting, and further extended time was needed for dialogue to occur. As a result, I could not introduce this method to all groups of young people that participated in my study and had to focus on those who participated in sessions at the training centre. Also, such an exercise needs good literacy skills in at least one or two group members.

Although I explained the process of doing the exercise and conducted mock exercises with each group at the beginning for greater clarity and comprehension, there was still some confusion in filling out the matrix. For example, instead of identifying key decision-makers in children and young people's lives, one group listed who should be ideally

involved in making each decision. Besides, young people often mixed up symbols. Therefore, it was important for me to review the findings with the young people not only to provide feedback to research participants but also for necessary corrections and clarifications. Another limitation of this exercise was that group consensus could mask individual experiences which might otherwise be different. However, I addressed such concerns by making sure that each group listed all expressed experiences and also by bringing out the same issues during the post-matrix discussion sessions.

The participation pie chart

The purpose of administering the pie chart with young people was to explore children and young people's participation in decisions over their use of time, how young people's everyday time was negotiated with adults, and how much say young people had over their use of time in various activities strictly enforced by adults. I was also interested in exploring how much say young people had over various decisions in their lives.

Asking young people to quantify the level of children and young people's involvement in decision-making could be quite abstract for young people. Therefore, for both purposes, I used a visual tool, a big circle, also successfully used by Christensen and James (2008a). It took on average three hours to complete one chart. Some young people completed the participation pie chart exercise individually whereas others completed it in groups. I administered this exercise with young people who participated in my research at the training centre as well as in schools.

In preparing the participation pie chart, I first invited the young people to divide a big circle on a piece of A4 size paper into various decisions over which young people do not have a say. The young people allocated space according to the percentage for each decision based on how much say they did not have on each decision and briefly narrated the reasons for their non-participation. Once the pie chart was completed, young people participated in an extended discussion around issues they had identified in the exercise. The discussion enabled young people to elaborate their reasons behind each point they had made with examples.

Other than devising the participation pie chart to demonstrate young people's level of participation in various decisions across institutional settings, young people also participated in making a separate pie chart called 'My 24 hours' or 'My Day' to

demonstrate young people's control over the use of their time. School-going young people and members of the Children's Council participated in the pie chart exercises. Young people split the 24 hours into various activities children and young people usually undertake in a day. While some young people meticulously calculated every hour to give an accurate and nuanced picture, other young people gave an aggregated figure of time use per activity.

The commonality of this method offered a very rich variety of data representing similarities well as diversities in childhood experiences based on gender, age, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, disability, geography and children and young people's social identity. When completed as a group, this exercise obscured individual experiences though offered a broader picture of childhood experiences in different contexts.

The participation problem tree

The objective of carrying out the participation problem tree (see also, Bessell, 2006b) was to explore and analyse the immediate, underlying and root causes of processes and factors that pose constraints for children and young people's opportunities to participate in decisions. I carried out this exercise with four mixed groups of 32 young people (aged 15 to 17 years) at the training centre. While one group focused only on two institutional settings, such as educational and community, three other groups addressed the research issues generally encompassing in all the institutional settings such as family, community, education, I/NGOs, workplace, and government.

I introduced a drawing of a tree on a flip chart indicating leaves as the types of immediate factors, followed by the underlying factors as the trunk towards investigating the roots as the root causes of constraints for children and young people's participation. This type of step-by-step investigation enabled young people to identify constraining factors by establishing relationships among various actors and structures. Moreover, the tool enabled young people to analyse various sociocultural and politicoeconomic factors of the immediate, underlying as well as the broader contexts that shape childhood experiences of participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

It took an average of four to five hours to complete the tree exercise as the exercise necessitated in-depth discussions and debates among group members about the process

of using the tool. Once the exercise was completed, young people presented the tool followed by in-depth discussions. This exercise needs good literacy skills among at least a few participants. It also requires good facilitation skills by the researcher to support children and young people in exploring issues and identifying relationships between factors corresponding to each of the three different layers of the tree. This type of exercise is considered more suitable for older groups and especially those with various life experiences as it requires a considerable amount of analysis, especially in relation to ideas of causation (see also Hart and Tyrer, 2006).

I did not have the chance to carry out this exercise with younger groups (aged 12 to 13 years) who might have proved to be otherwise competent to do the same. For example, in a focus-group discussion, in response to my question of why parents from less socioeconomically well-off families did not usually give their children much voice, a *madrasha* boy (aged 12 years) instantly made a causal link between price hikes for daily necessities in the country and children and young people's fear of asking for private tuition fees from parents. This example points to younger children's competency to identify structural issues such as poverty that shape children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in decisions.

The thematic drawings

The purpose of using spontaneous drawing (Sutherland and Young, 2014: 374) as a research method was to explore when, why and how young people's participation was prohibited. I introduced this tool to all types of young people and in all research settings. Some young people chose to use this tool individually while others chose to work in a group reflecting personal and wider social experiences. Some young people refused to use this tool at all. This exploratory tool yielded an array of rich visual illustrations of children and young people's subjective experiences and perceptions of the research problem.

Thus, the visual method presents a far clearer picture of the contexts, factors and consequences in a cyclical order of the very processes that effectively exclude children and young people from participation in decision-making in various contexts. For instance, the drawings overwhelmingly revealed the common causes, types and intensities of various forms of violence against children and young people in different settings

including home, school, community, work place, and residential care home, which effectively constrained children and young people's greater opportunity to participate in decisions in both private and in public spaces.

Some of the drawings were self-explanatory and representative. However, it was quite difficult for me to discover what many other drawings were in the first place and what young people actually meant by those images and symbols, or the stories behind them, without verbal or written amplification from the participating young people. Therefore, in order to capture the exact accounts of the young people, I followed the suggestions of other researchers (for instance, Punch, 2002a: 332). I requested the young people to either write or tell me what they had meant in their stories and the reasons behind choosing particular themes or images in the drawings. Even some young people with limited literacy or comprehension skills but who enjoyed drawing were able to use symbols to communicate their subjective experiences.

For instance, using symbols a group of young people individually drew a dilapidated house (girl, aged 14), a chair (girl, aged 12), a beautiful dress, a portrait of herself with a beautiful costume and her bare footed and barely clothed father (girl, aged 15), the face of a disabled boy (boy, aged 12), the chair of a grandmother (girl, aged 12), and a sweeping stick (girl, aged 12). Then the young people narrated their stories verbally around the symbols to link those symbols to issues of material poverty, relative lack of power, physical and emotional-psychological violence and discrimination which effectively constrained young people's opportunities and willingness to express themselves. Thus, the drawings not only offered rich insights into young people's individual and group experiences, they also acted as a useful gateway into in-depth analysis of the young people's various ways and forms of deprivation and exclusion from influencing decisions that affect their lives (see also Hart and Tyrer, 2006).

Dialogic diaries

I also introduced diary writing as a tool for research with young people and adults. The purpose of using this diary writing was two-fold. First, it enabled young people and adults to critically reflect on their experiences, attitudes and perceptions regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making. Second, the contents could be used as the basis of an in-depth conversation between myself and my research participants to explore societal attitudes, beliefs, values and practices towards children and young

people's participation in making decisions. Using dialogic diaries (dialogue within a diary) as an educational and research method is becoming increasingly established as a legitimate research tool (Ghaya, 1986, 1989; Abebe, 2009; Walshe, 2013).

I distributed the diaries to 15 young people who were leaders of district and sub-district level Children's Council, and to 14 program staff of the seven CBOs. I wrote the following questions in the front page of each diary for the participants to write about with anecdotes: What do you mean by children and young people's participation?; What are the factors that make it difficult for you/children and young people to participate in decision-making in family, school, community, CBOs, INGO, work place, residential care homes, and at government levels?

Some young people considered writing a diary to be private and therefore expressed perceptions, attitudes and experiences regarding issues they otherwise considered taboo such as choices over love affairs, marriage, and how to manage puberty and reproductive health. Some young people did not consider writing a diary to be confidential so avoided writing about sensitive experiences, which they later disclosed in a one-on-one interview. Through dialogic diaries, a few young people were able to express their experiences and perceptions regarding personal issues such as romance, marriage and reproductive health issues, which were greatly discussed later in the focus-group discussions.

While young people's diaries contained some valuable information, adults returned diaries with minimum and very general level reflections of their attitudes and perceptions towards experiences of children and young people's participation in decision-making. Both young people and adults were somewhat constrained in reflecting on their experiences and perceptions due to concerns around protecting organisational interests.

From the above it can be seen how, due to their ability to actively engage participants in a creative and entertaining manner (Punch, 2002a), task-based activities are popular techniques to use with young people as effective and appropriate warm-up activities to more difficult tools such as individual interviews or group discussions. Interactive methods often act as an ice-breaker or as a catalyst for discussion (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Bessell, 2006a).

Nevertheless, although helping to mediate communications and power relations between researcher and young participants, task-based activities that are considered to child-friendly, creative, fun and enjoyable to one group did not appear in my study to be equally the same for another group (see also, Punch, 2002a; Langevang, 2007; Christensen and James, 2008a; Kendrick et al., 2008). For example, some young people in my study, both younger and older, were intimidated by the task-based activities, particularly making the chart and drawing.

Girls and boys (aged 12 to 14 years and 15 to 16 years) in uni-sex groups in a remote rural setting were intimidated by the introduction of drawings and diagramming as an ice-breaker. Generally, I observed that younger children (aged 12 to 14 years) tended to show greater interest and enjoyed drawing and diagramming compared to older young people (aged 15 to 17 years). One possible reason could be that younger children were less conscious about their performance and thereby chose their preferred research tool without much hesitation.

Further, the reasons behind older young people being less attracted to interactive tools than the younger young people may be due to the lesser power inequality that exists between older young people and researcher, coupled with the older young people's greater experience and comprehension skills in traditional methods. In addition, many young people could be inhibited due to their perceptions about artistic competencies or literacy skills, and many could perceive drawing or diagramming as something very alien (see also, Punch, 2002a: 331; Heissler, 2009).

Some of the young people certainly lacked exposure and practice and many might have related the task with their school work to be judged as good or bad. Although I offered young people the opportunity to choose their individual level of competence in using certain tools, I was not always successful in being fully aware of how to enter into young people's local 'cultures of communication' (Christensen, 2004; Kesby, 2007). Research practice thus needs to be in line with children and young people's experiences, interests, values and daily routines, and through understanding children and young people's social interactions and social relations (Christensen and Prout, 2002: 483; Christensen and James, 2008a).

Focus-group discussions

I carried out focus-group discussions (FGDs) (Sutherland and Young, 2014: 375) with both young people and adults in schools, training centres and community settings (Annexes one and two). Focus-group discussions are considered a useful tool to diffuse inherent power dynamics between children, young people and adult researchers (Morrow, 1999; Punch, 2002a). The young people involved in focus-group discussions were members of the district and five sub-district level Children's Council, girls and boys from four secondary schools, *madrasha*, an educational coaching centre, working young people, young people growing up in two government and one NGO-run residential care homes, young people growing up in a brothel and young people of an untouchable 'sweeper' community. The adult participants of focus-group discussions were CBO staff members, community resource persons, and community opinion formers, teachers from secondary schools and higher secondary or college, *madrasha* and parents.

The main purpose of focus-group discussions was four-fold: first, to explore how local constructions of childhood shape the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making; second, to ascertain various relational processes that challenge translating the idea of children and young people's participation into practice; third, to explore the extent to which children and young people's networks were useful in enabling children and young people's inclusion, linking the power structures and participation in decisions; and, fourth, to identify ways through which children and young people's participation can be embedded in everyday practices.

I therefore paid particular attention to exploring institutional practices that produce and reproduce inequality based on age, gender, class, ethnicity, geographic and social identities including other diversities. In order to obtain this insight, I concentrated on examining relationships between various child-adult and child-child social positions that either constrain or facilitate children and young people's participation in individual and collective decision-making. With a few exceptions, I was able to administer the focus-group discussion guides with both young people and adults. With some groups I undertook a few hours to day-long conversations while with other groups day-long conversations occurred every day over a period of several days and or a couple of hours over a period of few weeks in developing the discussions.

The discussions and debates among participants generated very rich data that would not have been possible otherwise. I used a small pen-sized tape recorder with some groups of young people and adults who felt comfortable with it. Yet, I was vigilant to stop using the recorder if I noticed any uneasiness among the participants and whenever any participants asked me to do so. I discuss how I addressed the power and hierarchy that manifested themselves as a child-adult as well as a child-child phenomenon in group settings (see also, Hill, 2006: 81) in the ethical implications section of this chapter.

Semi-structured interviews

I also held semi-structured in-depth interviews with both young people and adults (Annexes one and two). All the interviews were with individuals except for a few where interviews were carried out with two young people together or with both parents. Studies suggest supplementing interviews with other methods because of the importance of privacy and confidentiality and because concerns about intrusiveness are not only important in sensitive personal matters but also can be equally important in more general matters (see for example, Hill, 2006: 82).

The young people who participated in interviews included young people who attended as well as those who were unable to attend focus-group discussions, existing and especially former leaders of the Children's Council who had recently graduated yet still were involved in leading and facilitating child participation programs of the INGO and CBOs, and young people from focus-group discussions who showed interest in talking to me in a one-on-one basis. The adult interviewees were mostly local and national government officials and policy planners, representatives of INGOs and CBOs, academics, journalists, parents, community people and teachers.

The purpose of these individual in-depth interviews with young people and adults was three-fold: a) to capture children and young people's subjective experiences of participation in various intergenerational and intra-generational social relations within different institutional contexts; b) to investigate the underlying attitudes, values, beliefs, views, and strategies of both adults and children and young people that shape children and young people's opportunities to participate in decisions; and c) to identify the formal and informal rules, norms, customs, ideologies and practices that guide various child-child and child-adult social and political relations.

I used the broad questions and themes from the focus-group discussion guides to facilitate the interview process with both young people and adults. This form of interview enabled me to explore various sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts that underlie institutional norms and practices that enabled and/or constrained children and young people's participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces. I was able to tape-record most of the interviews with young people and adults except for some government officials who declined to be recorded and some young people who showed uneasiness.

Workshop-style discussions

I also conducted three-day-long workshop-style discussions with 128 young people (aged 16 to 17 years) who were leaders of the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament representing all the 64 districts of the country. Similar workshop-style discussions were conducted with a group of 20 young people (girls and boys, aged 15 to 17 years) who had been trained as young journalists and researchers to conduct research in the project localities representing various districts of the country.

I carried out these discussions at two levels: first, all young people were grouped into smaller groups to discuss my research questions and came up with group findings; second, all young people took part in expressing individual experiences and views in turn in a plenary. The purpose of my discussions with these particular groups of young people was to gain an understanding of the first-hand experiences of young representatives regarding the role of young people's networks in facilitating children and young people's participation in decision-making across the country.

The discussions offered a rare opportunity to capture the diversity of experiences among young representatives across the country regarding the prospects and challenges children and young people encountered in promoting their participation in decision-making through young people's networks such as the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament. Bessell (2013: 12) argues that in the context of research this type of 'child-centred research workshops' offer valuable potential to be used within policy development and evaluation exercises.

Survey questionnaires

In order to complement the qualitative findings, I carried out survey questionnaires with 354 young people and 253 adults. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I developed two sets of questionnaires for open ended and Likert scale one to four (Annexes four to seven) based on the emerging trends and themes emerged from my qualitative methods. The choice of one refers complete agreement, two partial agreement, three not sure/ do not know while the choice of four refers disagreement. Thus, the survey was a later stage of data collection with more precise questions to deepen my understandings and insights of the phenomena I investigated. Therefore, the survey questions were mostly informed by the key categories and concepts and their interrelationships that I identified in axial coding of qualitative analysis described in the data analyses section below. I did pilot the survey questionnaires with a group of young people and adults. I finalised the questionnaires by incorporating lessons from piloting and feedback from a group of leaders of the Children's Councils.

I used two sets of standardised questionnaires, one set for young people and one set for adults. The open ended questionnaire contained 23 question items for both young people and adults. The Likert scale with 19 questionnaire items for young people and 23 questionnaire items for adults. The objective of this attitude survey was to explore ideas about childhood and child participation, attitudes, values, beliefs and practices of young people and adults regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making in different institutional contexts. I kept provision in the survey to investigate children and young people's experiences of inequality in regards to participation in decision-making based on children and young people's diversities including age, gender, ethnicity, caste, disability and various social identities. Therefore, although the survey questionnaires were not the major part of my field research they complemented the qualitative methods.

Most of the young people and adult participants who had participated in other methods also participated in this survey. The young participants included leaders and some members at district and subdistrict-level Children's Councils, young people from four secondary schools, one *madrasha*, one NGO-run institutional care home, and leaders of the Children's Parliament and the National Children's Task Force.

The adult participants of this survey included secondary school teachers of eight secondary schools and one college in Tangail, representatives of seven CBOs, six INGOs, UNICEF, district, sub-district and union-level government officials in Tangail, some local civil society members, and some parents. Despite my efforts, I was unsuccessful in carrying out this survey with national-level government officials who either refused to fill out any forms or simply did not return my questionnaires, or to whom I did not have the opportunity to introduce the survey.

Apart from the above attitude survey, I also carried out an institutional survey of children and young people's participation in Bangladesh. I distributed separate survey questionnaires with 19 questionnaire items (Annex eight) among six INGOs and UNICEF that had been working to promote child rights issues in Bangladesh. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about rules, procedures and existing practices of children and young people's participation within respective organisations. The findings enabled me to compile a broader picture of institutional status and practices regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

Data analyses

The analyses of this thesis are predominantly based on qualitative data. A range of carefully chosen qualitative methods described above provided the most and richest data and therefore comprised the major component of data and analytical framework for each chapter. I used the quantitative data only to complement my qualitative analyses in order to deepen my understandings and illuminate the dimensions of the phenomena studied. I drew on researchers who have offered philosophical justifications for such mixed method approach due to its comparative advantage in increasing understandings and gaining broader contexts for such understandings of issues under investigation (for instance, Bushin, 2008: 454; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Jung, 2014; Panda et al., 2014; Rodham et al., 2015). I carried out thematic analysis of my qualitative data by identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas to uncover themes (Guest et al., 2012; Fugard and Potts, 2015). In this interpretive inquiry, I used emerging codes for thematic analysis, which necessitated me maintaining reflexivity to avoid any subjectivity being incorporated in the data analysis process (see also, Hesse-Biber, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Jung, 2014; Panda et al., 2014; Rodham et al., 2015). The process of data interpretation and analysis continued

progressively from the very beginning of data collection and until I completed the final draft of my thesis. This type of reiterative analysis process helped me to rephrase research questions, to add new questions, to establish and identify emergent trends and relationships, ideas and themes, and to gain further insights (see also, Abebe, 2008b). In order to answer the research questions, I explored the relationship between categories and themes of data. After determining key themes I identified similarities and differences, patterns and consistencies, ambiguities and contradictions in data.

All the recorded interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. I myself coded the qualitative data using nodes corresponding to a coding dictionary that I had developed for classification and identification of data to address my research questions. The coding process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 2005; Charmaz, 2011) involved myself going through each interview and focus group discussion text multiple times to first develop the coding dictionary and then assigning relevant text to a priori code nodes as appropriate (see also Urban et al., 2014). I used NVivo10, a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) computer software package to effectively manage and handle my huge pile of qualitative data (Bazeley, 2002). It enabled me to look for ideas and concepts across groups using data retrieved from original source. By using retrieved text, I compared responses of different participants to compare and contrasts responses individually and in groups about issues relating to children and young people's participation in decision-making, which helped me to better understand the conceptual and theoretical issues of my enquiry. In the following section I describe the three stages of data coding and analysis process, open, axial and selective, that I followed in my research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 2005; Charmaz, 2011).

First, drawing on the participants' key words and phrases at this stage of open coding I gave conceptual labels to particular events, incidents, information and stories that the participants considered significant. Gradually, I transformed those open concepts into 'open categories'. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990; see also, Charmaz, 2011) at this stage, I focused on identifying the properties and dimensions of concepts as per the perceptions of the participants of the issues I studied. During this open coding stage, I developed a number of categories corresponding to my research issues.

Second, at this stage of axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, 2005) I identified a number of main categories based on the categories emerged through the open coding

procedures described above. Therefore, each main category contains ideas and concepts in a number of open categories. The objective of axial coding is to relate open coding categories together to form more precise and coherent explanations and meaning of the phenomena I studied. While the objective of open coding is to develop categories in terms of their properties and dimensions, the aim of axial coding is therefore to relate structures with processes to identify the complexities of the issues I investigated. This process of identifying connections throughout the data helped me to identify structures and processes that facilitate and/ or constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making at different institutional levels. Although I started analysing data with open coding, after a while both the processes of data analysis that is, open and axial coding occurred concurrently and sequentially (see also, Sorour and Howell, 2013).

Third, at this stage of analysis I identified the core categories based on the categories emerged through open and axial coding processes and systematically related them to other categories, what Strauss and Corbin refer to as selective coding process. The aim of selective coding process is to integrate and refine categories and establish clear conceptual relationships between the main categories developed through open and axial coding and therefore was done at a higher level of abstraction of concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This level of analysis helped me to determine the structures and processes that facilitate and/ or constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making at both micro and macro levels.

For quantitative analyses, I checked input of individual level data and administered data scan for accuracy. I ensured that the data set had been cleaned and prepared for analysis by identifying any missing data and cases with systematic response patterns. I myself administered the questionnaires with all participants. Participants, individually or in groups, were given some time to review answers to make sure that they had answered all questions. Therefore, there were no missing data. However, a few systematic response patterns were identified for a few open ended questionnaires. This was happened with only one group of adult participants in one high school where I had left the questionnaires with the Head Master so that the teachers could complete the questionnaires at their convenience. It appears that the concerned teachers consulted among themselves beforehand to provide the 'right' answers for a few questions. I did not discard those qualitative responses considering the limited number of participants with such systematic responses.

I followed a 'researcher-administered' protocol (Savahl et al., 2015) where I read the questionnaires to the participants while they were answering the questionnaires. I followed this protocol with only those groups or individuals who had experienced difficulties in answering questionnaires or needed comprehension of the research questions such as young people from the vulnerable groups, least reputed schools and *madrasha* and some adult community members.

The quantitative data resulting from Likert survey questionnaires were analysed using the Microsoft Excel 10 to yield descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies, percentage and cross-tabulations to obtain an overview of the survey issues, to identify dimensions in data and to compare findings between different groups of participants. The analyses of the categorical data derived from Likert survey were done for total participants as well as for individual group of participants separately. I analysed the responses to the statements to evaluate the extent of agreement or disagreement on the stated questions. I presented some of the summaries of findings in a series of histograms in this thesis.

Ethical implications

There has been a growing body of literature relating to ethical research with children and young people (see for example, Mayall, 2013; Raffety, 2014). The key ethical debates in the literature are about informed consent, protection, anonymity and confidentiality, and power (for instance, Powell, 2011: 1). Therefore, the debates are centred around how to achieve social justice for/with children and young people within the broader social and personal relationships of the research context while upholding the local ethos of relationships and promoting participatory ethics (Abebe and Bessell, 2014: 126). As such, issues of children and young people's representation and voice through ethical research are of critical concern. In this regard, researchers argue for minimising social distance as an ethical strategy in participatory research with children and young people (for instance, Raffety, 2014).

In the context of Bangladesh, and in researching children and young people's experiences, it is necessary to consider two important aspects of children and young people's position in Bangladeshi society: that children and young people are powerless compared to adults, and that children and young people are embedded in relational structures (Mason et al., 2003; Ahsan, 2009: 393). Children and young people and their competencies are therefore

situated in a context that fundamentally shapes any research processes and outcomes. Thus, I encountered challenges in putting ethical principles into practice regarding young people's rights to voluntary participation and maintaining privacy and confidentiality. I addressed the power relations between myself and the young people by employing participatory methods and a reflexive research practice (see also, Powell, 2011; Spyrou, 2011).

Researchers have stressed the power of gatekeepers and the consequences of restricting children and young people's access to participation in research (for example, Hill, 2005; Hunleth, 2011; Todd, 2012). My attempt to adhere to giving young people a choice for voluntary participation was significantly constrained by my lack of access to young people due to the presence of various gatekeepers. Such a situation made young people vulnerable to power imbalances in research settings as young people were unable to exercise their choice independently of the influence of adult guardians.

As a result, I experienced considerable difficulty in gaining consent to enable some of the young people to participate in my research. Therefore, my attempt to treat young people as competent agents was weakened by the impact of intergenerational power relations that predominate in Bangladeshi society as they do elsewhere in similar contexts (for example, Abebe, 2008a; Powell, 2011).

Apart from voluntary consent, there have been considerable debates in the childhood literature regarding issues of privacy, and the question of to what extent confidentiality should be maintained (Roberts, 2008; Powell, 2011). I found the principle of ensuring full confidentiality to be quite problematic (Mudaly and Goddard, 2009). I also found the principle of breaching confidentiality equally problematic (Gallagher, 2009). Therefore, I took a middle ground by considering ethics as 'situational and responsive' as suggested by some researchers (for example, Morrow, 2008). This approach necessitated that I develop a set of strategic values for reflexive practice. For instance, I followed the strategic values of doing no harm in the context of child protection and development by exercising different principles in different contexts.

The prevailing cultural notions of child-adult power relations tend to reinforce the inherent power relations that already exist between researcher and child participants, being characterised by adult domination and children and young people's subordination

(Gallagher, 2009). I therefore maintained reflexivity as a methodological necessity to address the imbalance of power between myself and the young people, which is stressed by other researchers (see also, O'Kane, 2008; Spyrou, 2011; Todd, 2012).

I therefore analysed my assumptions, positionality and role as an adult researcher to negotiate power relations with young people that might have influenced the data generated and the analyses. Being reflexive in the research process helped me address some of the multi-faceted child-adult and child-child power relations within various social positions. Moreover, this stand resulted in experiencing power exercised by young people over me on several occasions (Ahsan, 2009: 399-400). Nevertheless, both intergenerational and intra-generational power relations (de Lima et al., 2012) as well as institutional interests influenced my efforts to address inherent power relations in my various research settings and thereby significantly shaped my research processes and outcomes.

Conclusions

There has been a growing call in the childhood literature to develop an approach and research methodology that engages with children and young people's conceptions of the political (for instance, Walshe, 2013: 152). In this chapter I have discussed how a relational approach to children and young people's participation, and children-centred research based on the principles of children and young people's human rights, and ethical considerations shaped the research methodology and outcomes of my research through which I was able to engage young people and adults in political discussions. As I discussed this, rights-based and children-centred research methodology necessitated my taking participatory approaches to research with young people and adults which offered greater insights about the dynamics of relationships regarding young people's participation in decision-making. Various participatory methods and techniques enabled me to effectively engage with young people (see also, Eldén, 2012; Tisdall, 2012). I was also able to deepen my understanding of young people's participation in decision-making by drawing on some findings from quantitative methods with my findings from qualitative methods that I had employed with both young people and adults.

In relation to using these multiple methods, I therefore maintained flexibility in using methods and tools in a way that young people could feel comfortable with, have fun and enjoy most, which made me constantly reflect on what worked and what did not work

and why (see also, Punch, 2002a; Bushin, 2007; Cahill, 2007; Christensen and James, 2008b; Hoffmann-Ekstein et al., 2008). For instance, in a one-on-one interview, a former working young person (boy, 13 years) could not follow my way of speaking Bangla, and found it difficult to write a sentence or to draw a line due to his limited literacy skills and lack of practice. So, I stopped using the tool and invited him to tell his story about how he had become a leader of the Children's Council to represent working children and young people. This strategy worked well (Ahsan, 2009: 398).

Therefore, I carefully weighed the advantages and disadvantages of each method and tool I had introduced to notice whether certain methods and tools were not only to enjoyable for young people but also able to generate good and rich data (Punch, 2002a: 330). Complementing my qualitative findings with the findings of quantitative data with both young people and adults in various contexts, and interpreting data through a relational lens offered me further insights into the processes and structures around children and young people's participation in decision-making that affect their lives individually and in groups.

I addressed the ethical dilemmas and challenges of translating the rights principles into research by addressing power relations between myself and the young people, which necessitated my taking a reflexive research practice and participatory research approach. Finally, taking a social relations approach helped me to explore underlying causes of inequality in relationships based on generation, gender, class, ethnicity, caste, religion, geographic locations and, social identities in terms of access to and distribution of resources, responsibilities and power that shape children and young people's participation in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh.

Chapter 4 Children and young people's participation in decision-making: Bangladesh context

Introduction

In this chapter I explore various cultural-religious and socioeconomic contexts that shape the experiences of children and young people's participation in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh. An exploration of how childhood is conceptualised and viewed in Bangladeshi society is crucial to understanding children and young people's social position and thereby their experiences of participation in decision-making. In doing so, I examine how the cultural-religious context contributes to distinct childhood experiences. I identify gender and generation as two key factors, which also intersect with other structural differences such as age, class, caste, ethnicity, geography and social identities in determining children and young people's participation in decision-making. I then investigate the level of the country's socioeconomic development that interacts with the assumptions, values, and beliefs about the particular construction of childhood in Bangladesh.

I show that low socioeconomic development coupled with the absence of a welfare society contribute to the practice of intergenerational interdependence. The social values of intergenerational interdependence in familial relationships shape the socialisation process in Bangladesh. The particular socialisation process is aimed at developing children and young people's relational identity to conform to social norms and values of reciprocity and interdependence. I argue that children and young people's adherence to these social values of intergenerational interdependence and mutual responsibility constrain their opportunities to pursue personal goals and to participate in decision-making that affects their lives.

Cultural-religious context

Religion constitutes a critical part of Bangladeshi identity with its almost 90 percent Muslim population (according to the 2001 Census). Thus religion plays a crucial role in the construction of childhood identity, differently shaping experiences of girls' and boys' participation in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh. In the following sections I discuss generation and gender as the two key processes that also intersect with other structural differences in determining childhood experiences in

Bangladesh, including girls' and boys' differentiated experiences of participation in decision-making.

The generationed childhood

Generation is one of the key structuring factors of childhood experiences in Bangladesh. Following Mayall and Zeiher (2003: 3, 12), in this thesis, I use the concept of generation in relation to child-adult relations. Generation is defined as a temporal concept of relations between groups of people distinguished as childhood and adulthood by chronological order. Generation that determines relations within groups is viewed in a structural position of social, economic and political relations. As established in the Introduction of this thesis, there is no homogeneity in the conception of childhood in Bangladesh. In agreement with this, there was no consensus among my research participants regarding the age of childhood in Bangladesh. Instead, the research participants expressed different age ranges between birth and 18 years.

Nevertheless, a majority of participants had a view of childhood consistent with the two main age ranges, from birth to five years and from birth to 12 years, the latter as per the Islamic understanding of gender differences. There is a concept similar to adolescence which marks the gender distinction in adolescence such as *balok/balika* or *kishor/kishori* (adolescent boys/girls). Despite different participants identifying different age ranges for childhood, a common theme emerged that childhood is a stage of non-reason, and that children and young people lack the sense to articulate their thoughts or make informed opinions.

This non-reason status of childhood in Bangladesh is reflected in the survey findings. For instance, in response to the statement, 'Adults' conception of what children can or cannot do is the greatest barrier for children's participation', a majority of the representatives of INGOs (77.8 percent) and CBOs (62.8 percent) compared to representatives of community (59 percent) and government (59 percent) in my study agreed with the above statement. This finding may suggest that representatives of INGOs and CBOs, who encounter significant difficulties in translating the ideal of children and young people's participation in decision-making into practice in the community, tend to recognise problems in adult attitude more than representatives of community and government.

Similar attitudes are also reflected in a common statement made by many adult participants in this study. The common statement that adults use to refer to children and young people's non-reason status is, 'what do they [children and young people] know?' Thus, the connotation *shishu* (child) in Bangladesh in no way refers to a knowing, competent, responsible child, but an ignorant, protected, dependent and innocent child (Blanchet, 1996: 38). Instead of giving subjective opinions in responding to research questions, adult participants reflected the general social attitude towards childhood and children and young people's participation. Therefore, the adult participants, representatives of INGOs, CBOs, community and government, (93.7 percent) as well as young people (92.1 percent) in my study held strong views that adults need to be sensitised about children and young people's capacity to enable them to participate in decision-making.

A majority of the secondary school teachers in my study held a similar view that 'Students are not mature enough to effectively contribute to the education system' (FGD with teachers from 11 secondary schools, 09.01.2008). This view of childhood as a period of non-reasoning is further reflected in my study where more than half of the surveyed young people (64.7 percent) and adults (53.8 percent) agreed with the statement, 'When children are not considered as children, they can express their opinions in decision-making'. In response to the question, 'When is a child not considered to be a child?' a majority of my research participants, adults and young people, considered the answer to be the following which is reflected in the statement of one adult participant who was a member of Community Resource Persons to promote child rights in the community:

> When children grow older, develop physical and mental maturity, and reach at puberty. When children develop capacity to judge and reason between right and wrong, are able to move independently in the society, develop understanding about their family and social environment, and can express their opinions about themselves, can make decisions and when their decisions are valued. (FGD with Community Resource Persons, 16.02.2008)

Moreover, some young participants related the idea that:

> Children are not treated and considered to be children any longer in a situation when children are able to say right things and act like an adult, and are deprived of their needs and rights. A child is not considered to be a child when a child is working and feed himself or his family. (Interview, Bipu, boy aged 13, child leader representing working children and young people, 12.01.2008)

While the above ideas were applicable to girls and boys, some young participants made the distinction that:

> A boy is not considered to be a child when he starts working, earning money, looking after himself or raise a family. In the case of a girl, a girl loses her childhood if she is married or gives birth to a baby or loses her virginity. (Fatima, girl, aged 16, FGD with Children's Council leaders, 27.12.2007)

Furthermore, the idea of a child is also bound by the notion of innocence and sexual purity as revealed in the following remark by an adolescent sex worker:

> In the eyes of the society, we are neither children nor women but sex workers. No one treats us like a child. Yet, no one allows us to enjoy the status of a woman either. Here [in brothel], we all have only one identity—we all are *kharap* [bad/polluted]. (Aroti, girl aged 15, 10.11.2007)

Thus, the idea of a competent child, who is able to form informed opinions in decision-making or make decisions, is not only bound by increased age but by the cultural notion of maturity, competency, vulnerability, innocence and sexual purity. However, questions of competency and vulnerability are more acute when children and young people are younger. Thus, younger children have less opportunity to participate in and influence decision-making than older young people.

The view that children are incompetent when they are younger is reflected in my survey findings to the statement, 'Children up to the age of 11 years cannot effectively express their opinion in decision-making'. A majority of the representatives of community (71.7 percent) and government (54.5 percent) compared to 44.7 percent of the representatives of CBOs and none of the representatives of INGOs agreed with the statement. This finding reflects the greater ambivalence of community and government attitudes towards especially younger children's competency.

Generally, adults' ambivalence towards children and young people and their competency to participate in decision-making is reflected in their responses, with less than half of the adults (43.5 percent) disagreeing with the survey statement, 'Children lack the capacity to participate in the complex processes of decision-making and policy planning'. Greater ambivalence towards children and young people's capacity to participate is evident in the disagree responses of the representatives of government (22.7 percent) followed by community representatives (37.7 percent) compared to representatives of CBOs (54.3 percent) and INGOs (100 percent).

It can be inferred from these findings that representatives of CBOs and INGOs hold greater confidence in children and young people's competency to participate in decision-making than representatives of government and community members. In line with Bessell's (2009a: 310) study in the Philippines on understanding the attitudes of policy-makers and service providers, my findings suggest that competency and vulnerability issues, and thereby children and young people's opportunity to participate in decisions, is more challenging and confronting along with the decreased age of the child. Along with age, gender is another structuring factor of childhood experience in Bangladesh as I discuss below.

The gendered childhood

Gender is key in shaping girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decision-making differently in Bangladesh. As in many South Asian countries, while the birth of a boy represents wealth and the prospect of lineage, girls are usually considered as a *bojha* (liability) (Blanchet, 1996). Due to their non-utility value and dowry related costs, girls are usually considered as costly, thereby less valued, especially in less socioeconomic ally well-off families, and are discriminated against at all levels of society (Reinbold, 2014: 36).

Thus, the relationship between parents and children is often determined by the children's gender, as well as the sex of the parents. Fathers generally maintain distance from children and especially from girl children. Child-parent relationships based primarily on children's gender identities and roles have implications for the construction of childhood experiences in Bangladesh. Generally, the expectation that girls in Bangladesh observe *purdah* and maintain bodily integrity leads to constrained opportunities for girls compared to boys in terms of exercising choices in decision-making.

The gendered nature of childhood is observed in the fact that gender notions strictly limit what is expected from a girl and from a boy in Bangladeshi society though they are often intersected by other structural differences including age, class, ethnicity, geography, birth identity, different abilities, religion, birth order, and social identities (Rozario, 1992; Blanchet, 1996; Rozario, 2002; White, 2002a; Jensen, 2007; Heissler, 2009; Feldman, 2010; Islam, 2012).

For instance, the pie chart exercises with different groups of young people in urban and rural Tangail revealed that young people in rural areas had relatively less opportunity to participate in certain decisions such as making a choice for secondary school, selection of a group of subjects at Grade IX, making a choice for their future career, and regarding early marriage compared to district-level young people who exercised greater choices in all these four areas. In contrast, a group of rural young people mentioned that they had to spend at least 35 percent of their daily time in farm or household activities against only one hour per day mentioned by only two girls in the district town. Both girls and boys (aged 14 to 17 years) in rural areas and boys (aged 12 to 16 years) in district town spent at least two hours in outdoor play and recreational activities every day compared to girls (aged 12 to 16 years) in the district town who did not have the choice to do so at all.

In Bangla, the word *shishu* is gender-neutral and during *shishukal* (childhood), there is no gender distinction between girls and boys in terms of their mobility outside the home. Nevertheless, this gender-neutral phase in childhood does not last long due to consideration of observing *purdah* and maintaining bodily integrity for girls as they approach puberty.

Thus, Bangladeshi children's experiences of a gender-neutral childhood last only for the pre-pubescent period. The gender distinction in adolescence can be observed in the gender segregated terms *balok/balika* or *kishor/kishori* (adolescent boys/girls) reflect the increasingly gender-specific identities and roles for girls and boys. This gender-specificity relegates children and young people's particular positions in the social and cultural milieu of Bangladeshi society (Blanchet, 1996). For example, both young people and adults in my study identified that 'fear of breaking *purdah* and maintaining bodily integrity' is one of the main constraining factors for girls' limited opportunities to participate, especially in public spaces.

Girls and boys in Bangladesh learn familial and societal norms from an early stage. These norms shape girls' and boys' experiences of childhood and restrict their opportunities to freely express themselves in various ways. For example, young people and adults in my study all pointed out that on the one hand, the non-economic value of girls as well as the custom to observe *purdah* often makes girls less able to express themselves, especially regarding education, marriage, friendship, recreation and social life.

Boys, on the other hand, do not have any choice and therefore experience and accept pressure and anxiety due to their expected economic value to their parents and to fulfil their filial piety. Such obligation and reciprocity also makes boys less able to pursue personal goals such as recreation, social life and choice of educational subjects in school. Drawing on the experiences of cross-cultural studies, Leaper and Friedman (2007) observe that such institutionalised roles constrain the behaviour of girls and boys differently, thereby shaping their experiences of participation in decision-making.

Similarly, girls and boys in Bangladesh are socialised to develop different gender norms, girls being more nurturing and boys being relatively more assertive. The adult participants in my study, especially the INGOs and the CBOs, commented on the gender messages such as 'girls should be soft, polite and non-demanding'. Girls in Bangladesh constantly receive gender messages from various socialisation agents such as parents, siblings, relatives, teachers, neighbours, peers as well as from the media. The participants viewed that such stereotyped messages develop a particular gender identity among girls, which is subordinate to boys and also is one of the main reasons for gender-based violence against girls and women in Bangladesh.

Likewise, cross-cultural research shows that childrearing practices emphasising nurturance in girls more than boys is evident in societies where women are primary caregivers (Leaper and Friedman, 2007: 573). Similarly, Montgomery (2007: 39) points to mother-daughter relationships in which girls are socialised to grow up to become mothers themselves, thereby underscoring the gendered experiences of childhood.

The socialisation of gendered social-interaction in Bangladesh makes girls less assertive than boys, which constrains girls' self-expression. For instance, young people and adults in my study held almost similar views with the statement that, 'Boys have greater opportunities to participate in decision-making in families (adults 58 percent, young people 60.5 percent) and in schools compared to girls' (adults 51 percent, young people 47.7 percent). Young people and adult participants in my study also held the view that the particular gender socialisation which privileges boys over girls contributes to girls developing less confidence and less self-esteem than boys do.

Thus, girls' lack of confidence and self-esteem makes them less articulate and less able to express themselves than boys at home and in public such as in schools and in NGO

meetings, as is evident in the following comment of one adolescent girl (aged 15 years) echoing the views of others:

> At home we are constantly bombarded with comments such as, 'girl, you should not talk like that, you must not talk that much, and no one appreciates a girl who is *bachal* [talkative], *ugro* [too confident], and *man-shomman* and *laz-lozza nai* [lacking honour and shame]. You will have to go to your in laws' house, and you must learn how to remain silent, non-demanding and soft'. This makes us feel less valued. So, when we go to school, we cannot talk to teachers because we feel inferior inside. The same thing happens when we come to NGOs meeting. We feel shy and lack confidence to talk. We feel like if we attempt to talk, it may sound nonsense even if we are encouraged to talk in NGOs meetings. (FGD with secondary school girls who are members of the Children's Council, 09.01.2008)

The above quote suggests that expectations of girls' and boys' behaviour provide incentives or disincentives that shape experiences of participation, which is also evident in cross-cultural research (for instance, Leaper and Friedman, 2007).

Societal norms of honour and shame pose significant constraints in especially girls' self-expression as evident in my study. This finding corresponds with research that underscores gender relations in which women occupy a subordinate position in patriarchal Bangladesh (see also, Hussain, 2003; Hussain, 2010; White, 2010). These studies examine how individual, families', lineage and societal reputation depends on the conduct of female members.

One of the main reasons for the high prevalence of early marriage among rural girls in Bangladesh is to protect girls' reputation as well as to maintain family honour. Girls are rarely consulted in such marriage decisions and often conform to their marriage decisions and restrict physical movement outside the home. Girls as well as their families experience social sanctions in the case of any deviance from this norm. These norms of honour and shame upheld by society do not have any legal basis, but are strongly adhered to by people, especially in rural Bangladesh, where the majority of the population lives (Blanchet, 1996).

In sum, childhood experiences are essentially gendered. Various formal and informal rules, norms and beliefs constitute the gendered nature of childhood in Bangladesh, which creates highly differentiated opportunities for girls and boys experiencing choices in decision-making in both public and private spaces. The socioeconomic context is also important in shaping childhood experiences in Bangladesh.

In the following section, I show why and how a particular socioeconomic context such as that in Bangladesh reinforces generation and gender-based inequality in childhood, which shapes girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decision-making differently.

Socioeconomic context

The level of a country's socioeconomic development also determines the scope for children and young people's opportunities to influence personal and collective decision-making. In order to understand how a particular socioeconomic context shapes children and young people's opportunities to influence decisions, it is crucial to understand the level of socioeconomic development of the country.

Bangladesh ranks 146 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI), which is lowest among the South Asian region (UNDP, 2013). This position reflects the country's poor Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and poor literacy rate. The literacy rate (15 years and above) is 61 percent (female 56.9 percent and male 65.1 percent) (CIA, 2011; BBS, 2013b). The incidence of poverty in Bangladesh is 49.8 percent (UNDP, 2013).

Despite some recent achievements in economic growth of 5 to 6 percent per year with a per capita income of US$ 868 (Muhith, 2012), 43.3 percent of the population of the country still live below the poverty line of US$1.25 a day and 82.8 percent live on less than US$2 per day (World Bank, 2011; UNDP, 2013). The country's heavy reliance on donors and external sources to make up a significant portion, 44 percent in 2007, of the national budget suggests that Bangladesh remains vulnerable to external resources for realising children and young people's needs and rights.

Bangladesh has a primarily agrarian economy, employing 60 percent of the labour force. About one quarter of the GDP comes from agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Only 27 percent of the population live in urban areas (CIA, 2011). The total population of the country is 164 million in a small area of 147,570 square kilometres (UNDP, 2010).

Children and young people below the age of 18 years constitute 45 percent of the population of the country (GOB, 2011). The inflation rate is 8.1 percent (2010), negatively affecting low socioeconomic groups and especially children the most (CIA, 2011). Income poverty forces children and young people (14.2 percent of those aged 5 to

14 years) to take up various economic activities to support themselves as well as their families (ILO, 2010). Almost 50 percent of primary school students drop out before they complete grade five and become child labourers (UNICEF, 2010a).

The official figure for child labour does not include children and young people who are economically active but unwaged, such as children and young people engaged in the informal sector including the agricultural sector, household labour and in family businesses. Ninety three percent of all working children and young people, aged between 5 to 17 years, work in the informal sector. The proportion of working children and young people engaged in various sectors are: agriculture 56.4 percent, services 25.9 percent, and industry 17.7 percent. A majority of children and young people work for 43 hours or more per week, and they are also involved in hazardous labour (BBS, 2003; UNICEF, 2010a).

Although education is free and compulsory up to grade eight, most working children are out of school due to a demand for labour for household survival, an inability to bear hidden educational expenses, a lack of time to attend school or study and lack of educational support at home. The working young people in my study said that:

> We hardly have any choice in decisions regarding our working conditions including the number of hours we work, wages, safety measures, compensation, holidays and opportunities for skills development, education and recreation. (FGD with motor garage apprentices, boys aged 12 to17, 15.01.2008)

Working children and young people's lack of opportunity to participate in decision-making, especially regarding working conditions, is further constricted by the country's law that does not permit children and young people below the age of 18 to join associations. Although the legal age of a child's right to work varies between 14 and 18 years as per the Labour Act, 2006 (GOB, 2010c: 9), child and young workers are not allowed to join trade unions in Bangladesh due to their legal minority status.

As a result, due to an absence of working children and young people's trade unions, working children and young people's direct representation and perspectives are excluded from influencing policies. For instance, the National Plan of Action for Implementing the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2012–2016 sets the target to form a Child Labour Policy Review Committee with representatives from concerned ministries, NGOs and civil society organisations, and workers' and employers' organisations (MOLE, 2013: 15).

Similarly, the District Child Rights Monitoring Forum established under the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs to monitor and ensure child rights issues at district level is devoid of any representation of children and young people (MOLE, 2013: 38). Therefore, due to an absence of children and young people's trade unions, the policy negates the importance of ensuring direct representation and perspectives of working children and young people from both the formal and informal sectors.

Moreover, the existing policies related to child labour also do not consider child labour in the informal sector. For instance, the Labour Act 2006 prohibits the appointment of any children under 14 years only in the formal sector (MOLE, 2013: 9) and thereby ignores the interests of the vast majority of children and young people engaged in the informal sector. Due to lobbying and advocacy by civil society organisations (ASK, 2012: 17), the National Plan of Action for Implementing the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2012–2016 (NPA-INCLEP 2012–2016) recognises this gap and highlights measures to address some of the structural aspects such as economic structures of poverty and inequality and child labour in the informal sector (MOLE, 2013: 14-15).

In this regard, the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010 (NCLEP, 2010) has set an ambitious objective of eliminating all forms of child labour from the country by 2015 (GOB, 2010c: 4-5). However, there are discrepancies between the objective of the NCLEP, 2010 that sets the target to withdraw all forms of child labour including hazardous work and the worst forms by 2015 (GOB, 2010c: 4-5) and the goal of the NPA-INCLEP 2012–2016 that targets elimination of only hazardous and worst forms of child labour by 2016 (MOLE, 2013).

Moreover, in the absence of a child rights approach in national budgeting that could reflect indicators and a tracking system to monitor spending and progress of stated commitments (ASK, 2012: 23-24), it is unlikely that the goals and objectives set out in the Child Labour policies and National Plan of Action will be achieved.

A group of ten working boys (aged 12 to17 years) from a motor garage, 12 girls from domestic work (aged 11 to 16 years) and a number of self-employed young people in this study confirmed that their economic participation does not necessarily give them the opportunity to participate in decision-making such as those relating to education, work,

time spent, work conditions, negotiating salary, use of money, visiting families, and marriage.

A number of self-employed young people however, who combine work and study (mostly former and current leaders of the Children's Council), said that some of them have some opportunities to negotiate with their families in relation to choice of education, marriage and spending time and money. For these young people, education, life skills training including effective communication and negotiation, and social networking through the Children's Council has helped them negotiate with their families regarding personal choices in decision-making.

One young participant (girl, aged 17) who was a leader of the Children's Council, the National Children's Parliament, and the National Children's Task Force stated:

> In absence of my father, I not only make decisions for myself but also for my family, performing as quasi-household head. Once my father died, I had to take the family responsibilities. I offer educational coaching to students in my locality. I am also an adolescent peer educator under Children's Council programs to impart various trainings across the country. Initially, my mother resisted my initiative to go out and offer private tuition and peer education. My mother had fear that neighbours would gossip against me and the morality of my character. My mother warned me that 'if you live like that, you will not get a husband'. I did not have any choice but to earn to feed myself, my mother and two younger siblings. I successfully applied my knowledge and skills I had gained from life skills training to convince my mother to allow me to go out and offer private coaching and peer education training. In order to support me, *Bhaiya* and *Apu* (NGO staff) also talked to my mother on several occasions. (Interview, 21.202.2008)

The above examples suggest that gaining economic status is one decisive factor for children and young people's power to negotiate over decision-making in a context characterised by less socioeconomic ally advantaged conditions, illiterate guardians and/or absence of adults—especially male guardians—and absence of income earners. Children and young people's access to social networks, exposure to information and child rights issues, effective communication skills and social networks are crucial factors to facilitate children and young people's negotiation and participation in decision-making. In the following section I discuss how the particular socioeconomic context compels intergenerational interdependence in familial and social relationships in Bangladesh that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making.

Intergenerational interdependence: utility value of children and young people

Children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making are shaped by socioeconomic and structural factors as well as family systems (Kagitcibasi, 2007), which can be understood through the concept of moral economy. Moral economy in this thesis is understood in relation to collective rights, duties and responsibilities of both children, young people and adults that are most prevalent in the realities of the Majority World (Abebe, 2013; Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2013a: 11). In agrarian and traditional societies like Bangladesh with closely knit family relations and characterised by patriarchal family structure, the family pattern is predominantly characterised by intergenerational interdependence (Delap, 2001; Heissler, 2009, 2012).

In the context of Bangladesh, researchers underscore the importance of understanding family relationships that may involve some conflicts of interests even in the most nurturing relationships (see for example, White, 2002b). The conflict of interests among family relationships can be best understood through parental value attributed to children and young people in collectivistic societies such as are found in Bangladesh. Drawing on cross-cultural experiences, researchers demonstrate that the value parents attribute to their children influences their socialisation including their childrearing beliefs and behaviour towards children (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Trommsdorff and Nauck, 2010).

In the context of poor socioeconomic development and an absence of a formal social welfare system, families in Bangladesh are compelled to adopt a livelihood strategy based on intergenerational interdependence among family members for economic and non-economic supports. Children and young people in Bangladesh are thus viewed in terms of their relative utility value to their parents, as young children as well as adult off-spring as old-age security, which shapes their experiences of participation in decision-making in families.

Such intergenerational interdependence in Bangladesh is also evident in other studies in similar socioeconomic development contexts (for instance, Bessell, 2009b; Abebe and Bessell, 2011; Payne, 2012; Abebe, 2013: 79; Boyden and Howard, 2013; Imoh, 2013; Crivello and Boyden, 2014: 385). The value of children and young people is determined by the 'functions they serve or the needs they fulfil for parents' (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973, 20). Parents and young people in my study described a high economic value that parents attribute to their children, especially boys, in Bangladesh, which structures child-

parent interactions. The quality of child-parents relations thus shapes children and young people's opportunities for self-expression in personal matters.

The cultural values that exist in child-parent relations in Bangladesh concerning family interdependence, intergenerational intimacy and support attributed to children and young people in relation to income poverty, is also evident in other cross-cultural studies (Kagitcibasi et al., 2010, 652). Drawing on the study on the value of children and intergenerational relationships in cross-cultural settings, Kagitcibasi (1982) argues that the value attributed to children ultimately determines the pattern of child-parent interaction.

The following section shows that children and young people's value to their parents in Bangladesh leads to a particular parenting style targeted toward developing relational identity in children to conform to familial and social values of intergenerational interdependence. Therefore, interdependence in child-parent relationships is instilled through socialisation values of obedience and loyalty to develop relational self or identity (interdependence) among children and young people. As in other South Asian countries (see for instance, Mason and Bolzan, 2010), children and young people in Bangladesh thus develop a particular mode of being, which is relational, conforming to the wider familial and social norms of interdependence and collectivism. Children and young people's relational identity eventually prevents them from pursuing or maximising personal goals and making choices in personal decision-making.

Relational identity: authoritarian parenting, obedience orientation

Authoritarian and respect and obedience-oriented parenting, which denies autonomy, contributes to the development of relational identity and interdependence in children and young people (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 183; Crivello and Boyden, 2014: 385). The long term goals of parents for their children, such as interdependence and obedience orientation, influence patterns of child-parent interactions (Bornstein, 2002; Kuczynski and Parkin, 2007). Generally, parents, especially fathers, appear as authoritarian figures, which is reflected in hierarchical child-parent relationships in Bangladesh (Islam, 2012: 60).

The following anecdote exemplifies how the authoritarian parenting style, which is premised on the long term goal of parents of making children interdependent, denies

children and young people's opportunity to participate in decision-making such as education and career choice:

> I did not give him [son, aged 12 years] any clue that I was going to get him admitted into the residential cadet college in Barishal–far from Tangail. I told him that we are going to visit his uncle's house in Barishal…When the gate of the residential college was locked behind me, I could hear the scream of my son; I could not check my tears but I acted like a heartless father. My neighbours call me too autocratic….when my son grew older he told me that on many occasions, he wanted to escape from there but he had a fear that I might have killed him if he did so. I do not have any asset except my son. So, I had to be tough on him so that he could establish in his life; I wanted him to be an engineer. We do not have any social security systems like in the West. If I do not prepare my son now, who is going to look after us when we are old? In the context of poverty, your high thought children's participation in decisions evaporates through the window. (Interview, Assistant Head Teacher, Secondary School, 05.01.2008)

Such harsh parenting is viewed as a survival strategy by less socioeconomic ally well-off families in Bangladesh, which may override children and young people's interests such as participation in decision-making (see for example, BSAF, 2003). Several policy planners in my study held similar views that people's survival needs dominate parenting styles, as one policy planner threw a challenge to me, 'Do you think a mother in a slum can give her child a choice about food?' (Interview, Secretary, The Ministry of Law, 26.03.2008). Most of the parents, community members including religious leaders and policy planners in my study, justified discipline and control strategies to train children, especially boys, so that the children can 'stand on their own feet'.

In this context, the particular socialisation practice of 'standing on one's own feet' is viewed and understood in terms of becoming economically active to take own and family responsibilities and therefore the concept is used and understood in relational terms. Thus, values of duty, mutuality and intergenerational interdependence necessitate hard discipline and control socialisation to make children and young people, especially boys, economically active.

In relation to parenting and socialisation, many adult participants drew on religious education to train children and young people. The adult participants considered that the objective of such socialisation that includes discipline and punishment is to instil values of obedience and reciprocity in children. Cross-cultural research also notes similar socialisation in children (for instance, Trommsdorff and Nauck, 2005; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010). In the context of Ghana, Tuwm-Danso Imoh (2013: 11-13) observes that both children and adults strongly endorse physical punishment as a necessary socialisation tool

to make 'good' adults by instilling the values of reciprocity in intergenerational relationships.

The present and especially old-age security value of children appears to be a key process contributing to intergenerational interdependency, which shapes children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in decisions. Cross-cultural studies show the variation of survival and self-expression values (for instance, Inglehart and Oyserman, 2004). These studies indicate the extent to which people tend to prioritise individual choice over survival needs. The studies show a positive correlation between high levels of economic development and a higher level of individual choice compared to high survival values with lower economic development.

In the following section, I discuss socialisation to develop relational identity in children and young people to make them compliant to parental goals reflecting beliefs, values, customs and norms of the society relating to interdependence, mutuality and maintaining honour and shame.

Compliance

The outcome of authoritarian parenting makes children and young people in Bangladesh compliant, limiting their autonomy-seeking behaviour. In the context of Bangladesh, other studies also note children and young people's submission to parental or guardian authority and control and thereby their compliance to broader socialisation goals as well as occasional tacit resistance (for instance, Heissler, 2009; Islam, 2012).

According to socialisation theory (Kuczynski and Parkin, 2007: 274-276), there are two types of compliance: situational and receptive or willing compliance. Situational compliance stems from power base socialisation strategies thus depends on external controls. The opposite of situational compliance is receptive or willing compliance which grows out of a positive child-parent relationship. In receptive or willing compliance both child and parents are engaged in patterns of positive affect, mutual responsibility, and compliance.

In the Bangladeshi context, I noticed that instead of falling into either of these categories, children and young people's compliance to adult authority and socialisation goals largely

falls on a continuum between these two poles, situational as well as receptive or willing compliance. For instance, young people experience pressure from their parents to conform to parents' expectations such as academic excellence, or offering labour, or getting married. One parent expressed in this way:

> I do not let my son waste time at all by attending Child Council programs or playing with friends. He does not have courage to do things that I disapprove. If he gets involved with those activities, he will lose time and energy to pursue his education. His educational performance will deteriorate. We are investing everything in him so that he can complete his education, get a good job and look after us. (Interview, mother of Lavlu, boy aged 15 years, 21.12.2007)

Similarly, young people in my study expressed that they felt pressured by the needs and demands of their parents. Some young people also expressed resentment due to their limited opportunities to express their opinions to pursue personal desires such as attending school, the Children's Council programs, spending time in leisure activities, and pursuing educational goals. Echoing the experiences of many other young people in my study, the following quote by a leader of the Children's Council reveals young people's situational compliance to parental authority:

> 'Why do you want to go to school? Why do you need to attend Child Council programs? Does your Child Council bring us food? Do not you have any empathy for your poor father who has been working so hard to maintain the family? Instead of spending time at school and the Child Council, cannot you spend time in helping me in the field? I cannot afford hiring a labour to work with me at the field'. You know, when you hear such comments [by a father], it breaks our heart, it makes us angry, it destroys our self-esteem and confidence, and we cannot do things that we would like to do... yet, we listen to them [parents]. (Sohag, boy aged 17, District Children's Council leader, FGD, 20.12.2007)

While children and young people experience pressure to conform to parental expectations, they equally value the values of reciprocity and feel moral obligation to conform to adult authority. The, authoritarian parenting through emotional socialisation results in children and young people lacking self-esteem, self-reliance or confidence and autonomous behaviour (Bridges, 2003). Here, self-esteem refers to the value one places on the self, including being a competent member of one's group and community (Cole and Tan, 2007). Cross-cultural studies reveal that in order to make children and young people compliant, emotional socialisation is carried out through parenting strategies, such as through psychological control (Barber, 1996; Rothbaum and Trommsdorff, 2007: 476) and the expression of negative emotions (Cole and Tan, 2007), as also evident in the above examples in my research in Bangladesh.

This context in Bangladesh is also evident in cross-cultural research that Asian parents' inclination to express negative emotion by using love withdrawal, open criticism and disapproval, and shaming and being less concerned about negotiating with children and young people than parents in North America. As a result, children and young people from Asian origins generally demonstrate less confidence and self-esteem and are thereby less assertive than their Western peers (Cole and Tan, 2007: 525).

Discipline and control strategies embedded in the socialisation practices in Bangladesh make children and young people loyal to their families and conform to the need of their particular socioeconomic context. In discussing 'self as the cultural mode of being', Kitayama and colleagues (2007) argue that situational compliance impacts on children and young people's self-regulation, reflecting their 'responsiveness to social contingencies' rather than pursuing personal goals and desires.

Along with situational compliance, children and young people in Bangladesh also demonstrate strong receptive or willing compliance to parental or adult authority and socialisation goals. Young people in my study generally held the view that 'we must not express anything to our parents that may cause frustration or pain for them due to their inability to fulfil our desires'. Young people showed a strong sense of moral obligation to obey parental rules and support their families. For instance, boys reported that they accept parents' guidance to achieve academic excellence at the expense of following their own desires. Girls control their emotions to pursue study by accepting discriminatory practices of parents' greater investment in their sons' education. Children and young people's strong adherence to the values of reciprocity is expressed in many accounts of young people and adults participants in my study.

One young participant stated:

> I do not have time to play with my peers or involved myself in Child Council activities. My parents do not have anyone except me. I need to fulfil their dreams of looking after themselves. My sisters will be married off but I will be with them. I need to achieve academic excellence so that I can meet my parents' expectation of looking after themselves. (Interview, Lavlu, boy aged 15 years, 23.12.2007)

Similarly, the following example further demonstrates children and young people's strong receptive compliance to parental goals of interdependence in the context of their social exclusion:

> Who is going to give us shelter if we leave this situation? The society is not going to accept us; the government is not going to feed us. I do not have any choice. My mother has been experiencing so much hardship to raise me with the hope that I will look after her as soon as I reach puberty and initiate into this business [prostitution]. (Rupa, girl, aged 13 years, FGD with girls growing up in a brothel, 22.02.2008)

Likewise, children and young people also demonstrate a continuum of situational as well as willing compliance to maintain honour and avoid shame, which is more prevalent in girls than in boys in shaping their experiences of participation in decision-making. Thus, children and young people's participation in decisions is constrained by the social expectations of maintaining one's honour, purity, reputation or value in the eyes of society. In a highly sex-segregated society such as Bangladesh, especially young people's morals are fundamentally regulated through external controls (see also Papanek, 1973).

The morality of young people is judged through young peoples' adherence to approved social behaviour which upholds the importance of modesty and chastity. As in many other countries, any perceived violations of 'preferred status norms or values' in relation to sexual misconduct are considered as immoral, irrespective of actual conduct (Bauer, 1985:120). In this regard, gender ideologies of honour and shame act as forms of social control in constraining children and young people's opportunities and the ways it influences on the actual choices they make regarding their participation in decision-making.

Social control generally refers to 'a collection of mechanisms to induce compliance to norms' (Meier, 1982:43). The sociological literature uses the term social control in three contexts: (a) 'as a description of a basic social process or condition'; (b) 'as a mechanism to insure compliance with norms'; and (c) 'as a method by which to study (or to interpret data about) social order' (Meier, 1982: 35). In examining social control in the context of Mediterranean society, Peristiany (1965: 9) argues that honour and shame are social evaluations representing two poles that are subject to social sanctions. Stressing the importance of social recognition, Pitt-Rivers (1965: 22) also points to the double-edge of 'honour' which is not only the 'value' of a person in their own eyes, but also in the eyes of their society.

Thus, ideologies of honour and shame defined along the lines of gender, age and religious belief play a critical role in maintaining social hierarchies and boundaries. Such social boundaries, which are pervasive in the South Asian context, are aimed at legitimising the

discourse of the dominant group (see also, Douglas, 1966; Dumont, 1970, 1972; Rozario, 1992: 98; Nagar, 1998; Montgomery, 2001).

For instance, socialising with someone of the opposite sex is considered shameful and as leading to the loss of one's moral character. Young people and adults in my study reported that parents thus impose strict restrictions on the association of girls and boys as they approach puberty. Parents showed concern for both girls and boys regarding their interactions, especially as regards falling in love with someone of the opposite sex. Such associations and romantic relationships contravene the moral code of 'being good' in Bangladesh and are thus thought to lead to the loss of one's moral character. Due to such concerns, young people in my study experienced significant constraints in exercising their choices in decision-making, especially in relation to attending the Children's Council programs, socialising outside the home and developing emotional relationships.

Young people's constrained choices are embodied through their practices of compliance to social norms and values as exemplified in the following statement of my research participant:

> Even though I would like to go out for play with my friends, I cannot always do that because I am growing up. If I am about to go out and if my mother just says, 'Emma, do not go anywhere'. I just freeze. I feel like someone has drawn an invisible circle, a boundary around me. I cannot move a single step out of that invisible boundary. (Girl, aged 12, FGD with Mandy ethnic minority group, 07.09.2007)

Similarly, the pressure to conform to social norms of 'being good' on girls which restricts girls' opportunities to pursue personal desires such as association with boys and social life is evident in the following statement of another young participant (girl, aged 16):

> We do not have any choice to talk to someone who is a male. If our brothers or cousins visit us at the school gate and want to talk to us, our madams suspect that we have love affairs with the boys. Even, if our teachers see us talking to any boys on the way, teachers will also consider that the boys are our boyfriends. Then we will be insulted and shamed before the whole class or sometimes even before the entire school during the assembly. (FGD with BB Girls' High School, 08.02.2008)

Other studies in rural Bangladesh also show how adolescent girls' and boys' interactions and choices including those surrounding their mobility and association with opposite sex are constrained by notions of honour and shame that are related to 'being good' (Heissler, 2009). In this sense, boys also experience parental control because of parents' concern

that boys' moral character is at stake. These concerns are revealed in the following statement of a leader (boy, 16 years) of the Children's Council:

> One day while I was about to leave for the Child Council meeting, my father shouted at me. He said, 'are you going to Child Council again? I will break your legs if I again hear that you have had meetings and sittings with girls. (FGD, District Children's Council Leaders, 03.01.2008).

Another leader of the Children's Council (boy, 17 years) commented:

> As a leader, I have to talk to both girls and boys and especially if I meet someone on the way. But if anyone sees me talking to a girl, even if she is a member of Child Council, people will take it negatively. They will think that I have romantic or other relations with her. Then they will think of me negatively. I have seen that girls and boys hold hand and walk together and spend time in the park in Dhaka city but nobody cares about that. But if you simply talk to a girl in this village, it will be a big issue. (FGD, District Children's Council Leaders, 03.01.2008)

Thus, both girls and boys are subjected to the regulatory influence of social structures and institutions on their choices which make them compliance to social norms and rules. However, boys sometimes attempt to resist such control, believing that society is more permissive of boys' violations of social norms. In contrast, girls tend to suppress their desires in response to social norms of ideal femininity and appear to be less resistant to those norms than boys.

Conclusions

An understanding of the sociocultural context is essential for understanding choices that are available for children and young people to participate in decision-making in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. I have demonstrated that generation and gender are two key processes of social and economic life that differently influence girls' and boys' opportunities to participate in decision-making. In this regard, the notion of morality through the lens of honour and shame as ideological mechanisms of social control contribute to shaping girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decisions differently. It shows how patriarchal and social norms, values and customs exert considerable power over children and young people in Bangladesh in limiting their choices when it comes to personal and collective decision-making.

I have argued the values of interdependence in familial and social relationships contribute to shaping relational identity among children and young people which are conforming to

local social norms and customs. This finding therefore points to the importance of considering the relative value of rights at the macro level and relationships at the micro level regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making. Before I explore how values of duty, mutuality, interdependence, deference, honour and shame in familial and social relationships shape experiences of girls' and boys' participation in decision-making differently, in the next chapter I present roles of children and young people's networks in facilitating children and young people's participation, especially in public decision-making.

Chapter 5 Social capital: factors that facilitate children and young people's participation in decision-making

Introduction

In this chapter I investigate three case studies of young people's networks in Bangladesh that have been instrumental in engaging children and young people in public decision-making that affect children and young people's lives. These networks are the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force, and the National Children's Parliament managed by an International Non-governmental Organisation (INGO) promoting children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh. I explore these networks, including their structures and main features as political spaces for children and young people's participatory engagement in public decision-making.

Drawing on the concept of social capital (Putnam, 2000), I analyse the underlying factors that facilitate children and young people's participation, especially in collective decision-making. My findings suggest that four key factors are pivotal in enabling children and young people's participation in collective decision-making.

First, networks play an important role in creating different levels of social capital necessary for children and young people's access to various material and discursive resources (see also, Maclure and Sotelo, 2014: 385). Second, networks create space for children and young people's political participation by ensuring inclusive representation of different groups of children and young people and modifying those institutions to adapt the diversified needs of children and young people. Third, there is a need to empower children and young people and develop their critical consciousness. Finally, I underscore the role of skilled partners, adults and peers, through the processes of various participatory mechanisms in decision-making.

Drawing on Putnam's (2000) conceptualisation of social capital, I argue that children and young people's access to social networks is crucial for accessing resources necessary for children and young people's participation, particularly in collective decision-making. Social capital has value in the sense that social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000: 18-19). Putnam (2000: 19) defines social capital as 'social connections and attendant norms and trust', which is closely related to people's

civic engagement and political participation. Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital as a public good therefore suggests that high social capital facilitates beneficial community outcomes, such as increased political participation (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004: 157). Putnam (2000) identifies two types of social capital, bonding social capital and bridging social capital.

Bonding social capital (which describes strong relationships and networks within a community) helps to bind social groups together, which reinforces exclusive group identities. Bridging social capital is about the extension of social networks (which describes weaker relationships and networks across social groups) to help draw people and agencies together by bridging social cleavages due to gender, generation, class, ethnicity and ability, and other differentiations. Drawing on these two levels of social capital, I analyse how networks create political spaces for children and young people's opportunities for democratic representation in local and national-level decision-making that affects children and young people's collective interests.

I argue that the Children's Council serves as a grassroots-level foundation for structures and processes of democratic representation at higher level by the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament. I demonstrate how networks such as the Children's Council at the local level and the National Children's Parliament and the National Children's Task Force at the national level create political spaces for ensuring diversity of voices and inclusive communication to uphold children and young people's rights.

The importance of such networks can be found in the idea of inclusive democracy (Young, 2000). According to Young (2000: 7), there are two ways to address structural inequalities to ensure inclusive democracy. First, enable a wider range of social groups to have access to democratic institutions and processes. Thus, inclusive representation can be ensured by encouraging marginalised groups to express their perspectives. Second, adapt these institutions and processes to accommodate the needs and interests of diversified social groups.

In the following sections I examine the effectiveness of the networks and institutional structures of the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament in creating necessary social capital for children and young people's

participation in democratic processes, and for sharing power with adult stakeholders in public decision-making.

The Children's Council: community-based network

The Children's Councils are community-based networks managed and run by participating children and young people (aged 6 to 17 years) themselves. In order to encourage political and social involvement, the Children's Councils were established by community-based organisations (CBOs) to promote children and young people's right to access to information, participation, association and freedom of expression in their family and community life. The Children's Councils were used as a basic structure and means to organise, initiate and implement various children and young people-focused activities at the local level in Tangail.

The promotion of children and young people's political and social involvement through Children's Council activities was one of the four priority objectives of the INGO's project, Child Access to Rights through Development (CARD). Around 100,000 children and young people (aged 6 to 17 years) were involved in and benefitted from various phases of the project between 1995 and 2009. Children and young people, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicity, castes, and religions were members of the Children's Council.

Nevertheless, CARD project predominantly attracted children and young people from less socioeconomic ally advanced backgrounds rather than the middle class. The members of the Children's Council represented children and young people from school-going, out of school, working in various informal sectors and with different abilities. Eight community-based organisations (CBOs) implemented the CARD project in 220 villages of nine unions under five sub-districts of Tangail district. Union is the second lowest tier of the administration of a district.

Therefore, the Children's Council created an opportunity for children and young people to share their experiences and perspectives on issues that affect their lives at the local level. The Children's Councils also offered a platform for children and young people to participate in sporting events, theatre, debates, art and cultural competitions, journalism, newsletter production, and for practicing democracy through holding Children's Council elections. Five portfolios were maintained in Children's Council activities, including

departments of education; health and environment; sports, leisure and culture; information; and communication. The education department of the Children's Council was responsible for taking initiatives for decreasing school dropout rates, forming reading habits by maintaining study circles, and making the children and young people aware of the UNCRC. The health department of the Children's Council was assigned to creating awareness about sanitation, making oral saline, and raising awareness of nutrition and kitchen gardening. The environment department of the Children's Council was accountable for creating awareness of cleanliness, taking initiative for cleaning local community areas, helping to repair local roads, and organising tree plantation and nurseries.

The sports, leisure and recreation department of the Children's Council was responsible for organising sports, tournaments, and cultural competitions at union, sub-district and district-levels. This department of the Children's Council was also responsible for creating community awareness through performing popular theatre in the villages and holding debating competitions in secondary schools on various child rights issues. Popular theatre and debating competitions included child rights issues such as those relating to the negative effects of child marriage, physical punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation including trafficking, drug abuse, and the importance of birth registration, and organising the celebration of Child Rights Week.

The information and communication department of the Children's Council was responsible for collecting information about new births in the villages and providing this information to the *Union Parishad* (the second lowest administrative tier of the local administration) for birth registration. This department, managed by the Children's Council, was also responsible for collecting information relating to child rights violation incidences such as sexual abuse and child marriage, for reporting to the government's district committee for prevention of abuse against women and children, and for taking action.

Furthermore, the information and communication department of the Children's Council was delegated responsibility for collecting information from members of the Children's Councils on child rights issues in their localities and producing a quarterly newsletter to distribute among Children's Council members, and government and non-government offices in Tangail. Thus, the Children's Council created political space for children and

young people to organise themselves in a common platform to participate in sports and cultural pursuits, and offered a collective voice on local-level decision-making that affect children and young people's lives.

Forming bonding and bridging social capital

Mirroring the country's administrative layers, the Children's Council was set up in villages, wards, unions, sub-districts, and at the district level in Tangail (SCA, 2009d: 12). Around 100,000 children and young people were organised under 2012 Children's Councils. Of them, 1400 Councils involved children and young people aged 6 to 14 years, 600 Councils involved young people aged 14 to 17 years (called Adolescents' Councils), and 12 Councils were made up of working children and young people aged 6 to 17 years. In this thesis I use the term Children's Council to mean all three types of Councils. Considering the country's sociocultural context, the Children's Councils were organised under single sex members. Therefore, fifty percent of Children's Councils were made up exclusively of girls and fifty percent were exclusively of boys.

At the village level, each Primary Children's Council consisted of 20 to 30 members. A seven to eleven-member managing committee was responsible for administering the Children's Council activities. The general members of the Children's Council elected the management committee members comprising the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, five Secretaries for five portfolios and four general members. This way, the elected representatives from the village-level Children's Council served at higher-level Children's Council at wards (the lowest administrative tier), unions, sub-districts and at the district level (SCA, 1999, 2004).

Two representatives from the working Children's Council and a three-member Advisory Committee (one girl and two boys) from the graduating Children's Council, who were members of the Adolescents' Council, were assigned to the Executive Committee of the Union and District Children's Council. The objective of assigning these advisors from Adolescents' Council was to guide and assist the newly elected Union and District Children's Council members to perform their responsibilities and help them develop as young leaders (SCA, 2004: 11). All the positions in the Children's Council at various administrative levels were elected for a two year period. The local government offices of the elected adult chairman were used as the secretariats for union and subdistrict-level

Children's Councils. The INGO field office in Tangail was used as the secretariat for the District Children's Council (SCA, 2006d). The District Children's Council represented children and young people's issues at district-level government offices and at national-level children's networks and government forums.

Thus, the Children's Council offered bonding social capital necessary for children and young people to get together and participate in local-level collective decision-making. For example, by building ties and networks within communities as the foundation for more formal forms of engagement (Taylor and Percy-Smith, 2008: 387), the Children's Councils generated networks and ties among children and young people in Tangail. Such forms of bonding networks and ties among children and young people themselves were absent before the formation of the Children's Councils in Tangail. This form of children and young people's networks at different administrative tiers across a district was also absent in Bangladesh.

Children and young people's membership in these networks enabled them to identify, collect and analyse information relating to children and young people's situations and to prioritise issues of their concern to raise their collective voice at the local level. Thus, the development of children and young people's networks and the commitment that they demonstrated through their eagerness and active membership created a space for children's and young people's civic engagement (see also, Goodwin and Armstrong-Esther, 2004: 60).

The Children's Council was instrumental in establishing connections between the Children's Council and local-level power structures in Tangail. For instance, the Tangail district administration recognised the Children's Council as children and young people's representative body to observe Child Rights Week, and offered membership to its sub-districts and district-level government committees for preventing abuse against women, children and young people. As a result, the District Children's Council was able to activate the government committee for preventing abuse against women, children and young people to hold meetings on a quarterly basis.

Due to advocacy and networking of the Children's Council with local and district government administration, birth registration was carried out in all project localities in five sub-districts of Tangail, incidences of child marriage were reduced, and police started

patrolling in front of some schools to prevent eve-teasing and the screening of pornographic films in video shops near schools. Moreover, the District Children's Council leaders were invited to represent children and young people's experiences and perspectives in sub-districts and district-level government meetings and seminars such as on drug abuse and physical punishment in schools (SCA, 2006a).

In the following section I demonstrate how the Children's Council created political space for children and young people's participatory engagement in various democratic processes of local-level decision-making.

Spaces for participatory engagement

The Children's Council created spaces for participatory engagement for children and young people with their peers and adult communities and agencies to address children and young people's varied experiences at the local level. With this aim, the Children's Council deployed strategies to engage children and young people in participatory mechanisms to develop democratic values and practices among children and young people.

First, the Children's Council helped children and young people to develop democratic values and principles by organising shadow elections. Through elections, children and young people practiced how to vote, value and respect the opinions of others, select appropriate candidates and make decisions in a democratic way. Between 1995 and 2009, the Children's Council organised four elections to elect representatives at all five tiers of the Children's Council. Thus, the Children's Council promoted democratic processes by enabling children and young people to gain experience and understanding of a democratic election (O'Kane, 2003; SCA, 2009d: 12), which is necessary for children and young people's political consciousness and participation in collective decision-making.

A group of young people were trained up as Peer Educators to carry out voter orientation with the primary-level members. The INGO published a children and young people-friendly voter orientation manual and a number of handouts on elections to help children and young people develop an understanding not only of the election process but also the importance of the practice and meaning of democracy (SCA, 2006d). A large number of

trained young people in partnership with adults played major roles in administering the elections (Huda, 2002; SCA, 2006c).

Following the national electoral processes, the INGO ensured all required infrastructure and logistical support for conducting the Children's Council elections. Following the national poll, the Chief Election Commissioner, Returning Officers, and Polling Officers were appointed from distinguished adult members in Tangail. A five-member election commission was formed to conduct the polls. Local respected persons such as teachers, lawyers, journalists and human rights activists were appointed for the above positions. Like the national election model, the Children's Council election also followed an election manifesto, election schedule, filing and scrutiny of nomination papers and withdrawal of candidature as per the election rules. A seven to ten member election monitoring team was also formed involving respected community people and CBO representatives, and 90 young people were trained as young journalists.

Second, the Children's Council organised issue-based public hearing sessions involving concerned stakeholders such as government officials and influential community people including teachers, lawyers, journalists, and union, sub-district and district-level Children Council leaders during Child Rights Week. The Children's Council members discussed issues of concern in local Children's Council meetings. Information collected through children's newsletters and pilot studies conducted by young journalists in respective areas were the main sources of information for public discussion through public hearing sessions with local-level administration and civil society members. Issues such as physical facilities in schools including clean toilets, adequate class rooms, availability of text books, issues of educational private tuition, school dropout rates, physical punishment in schools, child marriage, prevalence of drug and substance abuse among youths, incidences of sexual abuse, eve-teasing, public space for play and recreation, and repairing roads and culverts on the way to schools were raised in these public hearing sessions.

There are criticisms that participation of children and young people is often hijacked by corporate agendas rather than a representation of children and young people's own realities, which reinforces power inequalities between children and young people and adults (for example, Percy-Smith, 2010: 112). In the case of the Children's Council, instead of exclusively responding to the organisational agenda, the Children's Council

created opportunities for debates and discussions on varied lived realities of children and young people at the local level.

For instance, in the primary, sub-district and district level meetings and through children's newsletter, the Children Council members raised issues of their concern such as child marriage, physical punishment at school, unavailability of school textbooks at the beginning of academic calendar, child marriage, drug and substance abuse, and display of pornographic videos at the shops next to schools. As a result, these issues were taken up and discussed in the district public hearing sessions during Child Rights Week involving the district government officials, representatives of civil society organisations and leaders of the Children's Councils. Consequently, some CBOs undertook sensitisation and public education program with the community including marriage registrars and law enforcement agencies to address those issues. For instance, police started patrolling in front of the schools to stop eve-teasing and display of pornographic videos at the shops near schools.

Finally, when young people were trained as facilitators and peer educators, the INGO and CBOs delegated responsibilities to young people themselves for organising, coordinating, and implementing Children's Council activities with active support from CBOs and the INGO. Thus, there were opportunities for young people's greater engagement in various participatory processes of Children's Council activities. Children and young people's actions within these institutions were therefore structured in necessary and ongoing support from responsible adults and trained peers, which was necessary for empowering children and young people in various participatory mechanisms (also see for example, Percy-Smith, 2010: 117-118).

Empowerment through critical consciousness

Considering that human development occurs in a context of building relationships and accessing resources (Carlson and Earls, 2011: 229), empowering children and young people through developing their critical consciousness was an integral part of the Children's Council programs. Such an empowerment agenda points to the idea that the Children's Council programs were drawn on the insights of Paulo Freire to develop educational approaches that built on people's own perceptions to develop their political

consciousness from the below—what Freire (1970: 14, 16) called 'the pedagogy of the oppressed'.

Under the 'conscientisation' effort, members of the Children's Council were given training on child rights, leadership, advocacy, social responsibility, life skills and management of the Children's Council. Around 400 young people (50 percent girls and 50 percent boys), aged 14 to 17 years, were trained as Peer Educators and they, in turn, imparted the same training to their peers and became advocates for child rights promotional activities (SCA, 2008) and formed child rights promotional groups in their localities. Around 60,000 young people (50 percent girls and 50 percent boys), aged 12 to 17 years, were brought under the training program through a peer education approach to develop their political consciousness and enable themselves to engage in various participatory mechanisms of decision-making at the local level.

Under capacity development initiatives, around 5,000 young leaders of the Children's Council received leadership training to manage Children's Council activities. The training covered topics such as what is leadership, how to lead, what are the necessary qualifications of a leader, how to select the right leader, how to conduct a meeting, how to make a decision following democratic processes and how to write a resolution. The trained leaders imparted the same knowledge and skills to their respective Management Committees of different layers of the Children's Council across the district.

Apart from the above training, 25,000 young people received training in life skills development. Through this training, young people gained greater confidence in ten core competencies, namely decision-making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, and coping with stress. The social skills gained through this course proved to be very effective in helping young people develop greater self-esteem, confidence, communication and negotiation skills and enabled young people to express their views.

Further, 28,000 young girls (aged 13 to17 years) received training on Protective Behaviour to protect them from various forms of abuse, including sexual abuse, that exist in the community. The Protective Behaviour module was developed through a pilot study

with young girls over six months by an expert female volunteer to capture local realities, the symptoms of abuse and local strategies to protect girls from potential abuses.

Moreover, as a part of the children and young people's empowerment process, 500 young people (50 percent girls and 50 percent boys) received training to act as young journalists in the project areas in Tangail. The training was customised to meet the specific needs of young people to become journalists. A pool of adult journalists of high repute at the national level were contracted to train the young people. The young journalists collected local news of children and young people's interests and rights issues, such as incidences of child marriage, child abuse, drug and substance abuse, absence of birth registration, issues of teachers' absenteeism in schools, incidences of major physical punishment at schools, and unavailability of school text books.

The newsletter also published news on Children's Council activities and success stories of children and young people across the district. The young journalists sent the collected information to the District Children's Council. An editorial board, consisting of district-level young journalists, was responsible for editing the news and publishing the quarterly newspaper, called 'Children's Voice'. The newsletter was circulated across the Children's Councils for wider readership as well as among the CBOs and district government offices in Tangail. The INGO field office in Tangail was used as the secretariat for District Children's Council activities, including production of the newsletter with active support from the INGO field staff members.

Furthermore, 5,400 (50 percent girls and 50 percent boys) young people received training on Theatre-for-Development. These trained young people formed into 540 theatre groups and performed child rights related issue-based popular theatre in their locality, such as that relating to the negative impact of child marriage, physical punishment, sexual abuse and harassment including eve-teasing, and drug and substance abuse. The theatre groups chose strategic locations such as school play grounds, bus stops, open fields in front of government offices, and village fairs so that they could attract a wide range of audiences. By the end of each performance, the young performers invited and engaged the audience into a dialogue regarding the issues presented and asked questions for solutions.

A similar approach is evident in the 'Theatre of the Oppressed', in which Boal (1979) developed the idea of 'simultaneous dramaturgy' methods of actor-audience interaction

in which actors stop a drama and ask the audience for insights and solutions to the issues presented. This technique helped break the barrier between young people and adult community in Tangail to create dialogue over issues that were considered to be sensitive such as sexual abuse, physical punishment and drug abuse. In the context of Tanzania, the Young Citizens program used a similar technique to successfully initiate dialogue in community settings over the community's norms related to HIV/AIDS (Carlson and Earls, 2011: 229, 235). In this way, the Children's Council was able to engage with the adult community to initiate dialogue over issues considered sensitive for child-adult interactions in a context such as Bangladesh in general and in Tangail in particular.

In order to make Children's Council initiatives more effective, the Children's Council involved both the adult community and local civil administration. A total of 540 respected community people including college teachers, lawyers and social workers were trained as Community Resource Persons on the UNCRC and local child rights issues. These resource persons were responsible for imparting the same training with the wider adult audience in the project localities—including parents, teachers, religious leaders, marriage registrars and government officials—through workshops and seminars. The Community Resource Persons acted as a sounding board of the Children's Council in promoting child rights agendas locally. Besides, a number of committees were formed involving adult community members and young leaders to support Children's Council initiatives at Sub-district, Union and at the Ward level in Tangail.

From the above examples it can be seen how children and young people's participation in children's networks offered children and young people access to development and utilisation of necessary bonding and bridging social capital to engage in various participatory activities. The Children's Council, as forms of local level networks, thus created opportunities for children and young people's development of ideas and opinions, and for reflection and learning. As such, these types of community-based networks acted as conduits of knowledge, agency, and power (see also, Taylor and Percy-Smith, 2008: 387).

Further, the Children's Council created spaces for children and young people's political representation at the local level. The structures of the Children's Council made provisions to ensure inclusive representation by meeting the preconditions of bringing diversified social groups into membership with different perspectives and with different ways of

expression such as through meetings, debate, discussion, popular theatre, reading groups, drawing and art and producing news. Children and young people were empowered by developing critical consciousness of their own situation through enhancing their knowledge and skills in a range of human development areas.

Finally, partnership with adults and skilled peers was an integral aspect of Children's Council programs to help children and young people access to necessary resources and develop required skills to enable children and young people in participatory engagement. This way, the Children's Council offered a political space for political interdependence between children and young people and various adult duty bearers at the local level.

The above findings suggest several implications for children and young people's participation, especially in public decision-making. First, public and development policies need to aim to build community-based bonding and bridging social capital to improve cohesion among children and young people themselves, children, young people and adults, and various agencies (see also, Putnam, 2000: 363).

Second, ensuring children and young people's civic engagement necessitates recognising children and young people's participation as political interdependence and as difference of diversified social groups. Therefore, instead of considering participation as an exclusive autonomous and independent activity, children and young people's participation needs to be reconceptualised as a relational process and as difference-responsive (see for instance, Wall, 2011: 91-92).

The Children's Council not only generated necessary bonding and bridging social capital at local level by organising children and young people under a common platform across the district, this informal community-based network also laid the foundation for expanding social networks across the country. Despite its relative success in developing bonding and bridging social capital that helped children and young people to raise their issues at the local level, the Children's Council was unable to access macro-level power structures to influence policies and services that impact on children and young people's lives at the local level. The leaders of the Children's Council, as well as the supporting INGO and CBOs, recognised the need to extend children and young people's networks at the national level in order to create impact on policy and services.

The Country Director of the INGO stated that:

> Children's Councils have served its purpose at local level. We gradually started to realising that child rights issues identified by children cannot be addressed by the local authority. We need to build children's movement by expanding children's networks beyond Tangail to develop and involve networks of other children across the country... The outcome is the formation of the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament—the country-wide children's networks to monitor and policy advocacy on child rights issues. (Interview, 12.03.2008)

Similarly, the following statement of a former leader of the Children's Council and who was an existing advisor of the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) and the National Children's Parliament pointed to the limitation of the Children's Council and stressed the importance of expanding children's networks beyond the Tangail locality:

> We became aware of our rights violation in the areas such as physical and emotional punishment at school, early marriage and sexual abuse of girls, child labour, drug abuse among boys and school dropout. Through community-based awareness raising activities and public hearing sessions with the district officials, we came to understand that none of these issues could be addressed by the Tangail authority. In order to address our problems in Tangail, we need to reach the government at national level. In order to do so, we have to strengthen our voice by bringing more voices from across the country... We ended up establishing the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament. (Interview, Sabbir, boy, 10.02.2008)

Drawing on case studies of the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) and the National Children's Parliament (NCP), in the following sections I analyse how these two formal networks provided bridging social capital by extending children and young people's networks across the country, networking with adult organisations, and access to and engage with the macro power structures that shape policies and services.

The National Children's Task Force: participatory engagement structure

The National Children's Task Force (NCTF) is a country-wide young people-led participatory structure for young people to monitor progress in implementing the National Plan of Action (NPA) for children and young people, children and young people-related policies and government programs in Bangladesh. Since 2003, the INGO program had been supporting the NCTF under its project called 'Listen to Children's Voices'. Since 2009, the INGO had expanded NCTF activities through its project, 'Our Report towards Our Bangladesh', 2009–2012 in all 64 districts of the country (SCA/GoB/UNICEF, 2003; NCTF, 2006, 2008; SCA, 2009d). The NCTF activities can be accessed through www.nctfkontho and www.nctf.bd.com.

The genesis of the idea for establishing the NCTF lies in the recommendations of the young people, the majority of whom were leaders of the Children's Council, who participated in the planning consultations on the implementation of the National Plan Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking (NPA-SAECT), 2002–2006, adopted in 2002 by the Bangladesh government. The formation of the NCTF was one of the participatory strategies of children and young people identified in the NPA-SAECT, 2002–2006. Eventually, along with other adult stakeholders, the NCTF was recognised as the children and young people's representative body and was included as one of the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating partners of the general NPA, 2005–2010 by the government (GOB, 2006: 102, 114-146). Thus, beyond its initial objectives, the NCTF evolved and had been functioning as a children and young people's watchdog on government policies and services including grassroots-level child rights violations (SCA, 2009e).

Following the NPA-SAECT 2002–2006, in 2003, the INGO in association with the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF organised consultations with young people, aged 11 to 18 years, to form the NCTF. A total of 169 young people from various backgrounds representing 29 of the 64 districts participated in a three-day-long consultation. A group of young people, mostly the Children's Council leaders trained up by the INGO as Facilitators, led the consultations.

In 2004, around 1,000 young people from all 64 districts of the country participated in a three-day-long and young people-led national consultation to prepare the final draft of the operational guideline for the NCTF. In 2005, the central committee of the NCTF was formed and the operational guideline was finalised by the participating young people in cooperation with adults. The NCTF created participatory engagement structures where young people from diversified backgrounds were able to engage themselves in various participatory activities to articulate their perspectives and shared experiences and interests in each of the 64 districts of the country. The INGO, in partnership with 63 national and community-based organisations, involved young people from all the 64 districts of the country to develop this nation-wide young people's network.

Bridging networks and linking power structures

The National Children's Task Force (NCTF) operates at the national level and across the country through its 64 district committees in partnership with national and local non-government organisations. As of 15 September 2014, a total of 38,000 young people (50 percent girls and 50 percent boys) aged 12 to 17 years were involved with NCTF as general members (personal communication with the Program Officer, Save the Children International, Bangladesh, 18 September 2014). Until its consolidation with other Save the Children working on child rights and development issues in Bangladesh in 2011, the INGO country office in the capital city offered office space for the national secretariat for the NCTF and extended necessary technical, logistical and financial supports to the NCTF. The Children's Academy of the Bangladesh Government called Bangladesh *Shishu* Academy (BSA) provided office space for the district-level secretariat of the NCTF in all the 64 districts of the country (BSA, 2005). The objective of the BSA is to promote children and young people's cultural pursuits under the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs[5]. Currently, the NCTF activities are managed by Save the Children International in Bangladesh.

The NCTF District Committee comprised young people aged 12 to 17 years from diverse backgrounds, including those relating to gender, sociocultural and economic status, minority status, educational status, various social identities and different capacities. The general members of the NCTF selected a Central Executive Committee of 11 members. The Central Committee comprised 64 Chairpersons from the 64 District Committees by position. A Central Operational Committee was also formed with 120 members from 64 districts (one girl and one boy per district) by election by the district members for a period of two years. Through an annual conference, the NCTF produced district reports on its achievements, challenges, and strengths (SCA, 2009d).

Due to lobbying with the government by the INGO, in 2005, through a circular, the government officially recognised the NCTF as a legitimate body that could contribute to the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Children, and report on the implementation of the Child Rights Convention (GOB, 2006: 102). Thus, the NCTF emerged not only as a 'representational body' but also as a

[5] Officially it is called the 'Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs'. For this thesis I am using the 'Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs'.

'promotional body' for activism, negotiation and dialogue (see also, Tisdall and Davis, 2004) with key actors including the government to promote children and young people's perspectives in various policies and services in Bangladesh.

Empowerment and participatory engagement

The National Children's Task Force (NCTF) offered spaces for young people's participatory engagement and empowerment through a range of activities. These included capacity development training, producing young people-led research, monitoring and reporting on the child and young people's rights situation, and holding public hearing sessions with government offices at 64 districts and all six divisional levels of the country. Initially, a total of 128 young people, two from each of the 64 districts, were trained as young journalists and 12 young people received training on video documentation.

An additional 640 young people, ten from each of the 64 districts, also received training as young journalists. These 640 young journalists acted as Peer Educators to train 55 young people per district to prepare 3520 young journalists across the country. Through young journalism, the NCTF published regular children and young people's rights violation reports both in local and national newspapers (SCA, 2009e). The NCTF Central Committee maintained the website (www.nctf.bd.com) and the web portal (www.nctfkontho) to update district and central news regarding child rights issues.

The NCTF produced district-wide situational report on the status of children and young people's rights in Bangladesh. Apart from developing young people as young journalists to report and monitor children and young people's rights violations, a group of 64 adult journalists in 64 districts were also trained up on children and young people's rights issues. The objective of this capacity building of local adult journalists were to encourage adult journalists to report on children and young people-sensitive news and stories and child rights violation issues in local and national newspapers. Besides, collaboration was established between the trained adult journalists and young journalists so that the young journalists could receive ongoing mentoring by the trained adult journalists at the local level.

In 2008, the NCTF produced young people-led alternative report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. A group of 256 NCTF members, four young people

from each of the 64 districts, were trained up to form a team of young researchers to monitor children and young people's rights situations at the local level. The young researchers received training on child and young people's rights, Concluding Observations 2009 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and simplified ethnography research methodology including reporting methods.

The young researchers were responsible for observing and reporting children and young people's rights situations in households, schools, hospitals and neighbourhoods. Young researchers used young people-friendly monitoring and reporting checklists to collect information on health, education and protection issues on a quarterly basis. The monitoring checklists were based on the recommendations of the Concluding Observations 2009 of the UNCRC to the Bangladesh government.

Since 2011, the NCTF has produced annual situational reports including rights violations as well as positive developments in the areas of child rights for each of the 64 districts. The compilation of the annual reports was used as the basis for developing an alternative report in 2011 on children and young people's rights situation for the five-yearly UNCRC reporting cycle (NCTF, 2008; SCA, 2009e).

In the 2007/2008 UNCRC reporting period, the NCTF in coordination with other 13 youth organisations in the country developed the first-ever young people-led alternative report on the status of children and young people's rights in Bangladesh to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In 2013, the NCTF produced young-people-led alternative report to the UNCRC and a supplementary report is due to be submitted by the NCTF to the UNCRC by November 2014 (NCTF, 2013). The young people-led alternative reports thus served a strong basis for lobbying and advocacy with the government, civil society organisations and development partners to realise children and young people's rights in Bangladesh.

Apart from the district-level research team, a special group of Peer Educators comprised young people of 12 to 17 years was developed to collect information from 20 socially excluded groups of children and young people across the country. These special Peer Educators were representatives of socially excluded groups of young people, including

young people in conflict with the law, young people without families, with different abilities, and minorities based on ethnicity, caste and religion (SCA, 2009a: 3).

Moreover, a group of young journalists was oriented every year on young people-led monitoring methods so that they could support the young researchers in collecting and analysing data and in writing reports on issues related to children and young people's rights to local and national newspapers, district newsletters and to other forms of media such as electronic (SCA, 2009a). The NCTF established linkages with other networking organisations across the country aligned with UNCRC so that the NCTF could incorporate relevant information in its existing reporting system (SCA, 2009a: 3).

Since 2009, the NCTF systematically conducted situational analyses of children and young people's rights through its district-based NCTF trained young members to contribute to the alternative report to the UNCRC. As of 2011, the NCTF had a network of 256 researchers, 80 facilitators from socially excluded groups, 128 journalists, and 128 youth parliamentarians across the country. The NCTF is operationalised through collaboration with 63 NGOs in all 64 districts of the country.

One of the main activities of the NCTF at all 64 districts and six divisional levels was to organise Public Hearing sessions with government officials, teachers, doctors, human rights activists, social workers and media people to address violations of children and young people's rights. The NCTF District Committees organised such sessions in observance of the Child Rights Week. Information about the local-level children and young people's rights situations, collected through monthly reporting by the young journalists, was presented to the Public Hearing sessions.

The issues identified by the young journalists and presented at the Public Hearing sessions were related to education, health care, entertainment, and social environment along with recommendations to address attendant problems. The NCTF District Committees followed up with local-level government administrations every six months to monitor the progress of the implementation of any commitments made, and published the reports in the NCTF quarterly newsletter (NCTF/SCA, 2009).

In 2007, the NCTF District Committees undertook a survey on the involvement of children and young people in hazardous political activities. The survey of 668 children

and young people across the country showed that children and young people were involved in hazardous political activities including attending processions, campaigning, throwing stones, setting fires and guarding election camps, and they often ended up being seriously injured. The main reason for poor children and young people being involved in such hazardous political activities was that they were lured by the political parties with food, cash and other benefits, and false promises such as getting a job (NCTF, 2007: 7).

In 2007, the NCTF District Committees also organised nation-wide art competitions titled 'violence against children by involving them in political activities'. A total of 1,788 children and young people from all 64 districts took part in the competition. The first three winners from each district presented their art works in an art exhibition at the national level. The drawings expressed children and young people's sense of insecurity, concerns and the intensity of abuses experienced at the hands of political parties (NCTF, 2007: 8; 2008).

In 2007, drawing on the above study findings, the NCTF Central Committee submitted a memorandum to the Chief Election Commissioner, demanding the inclusion of a law in the new code of conduct for the election to ban the involvement and abuse of children and young people in political activities (NCTF, 2007: 7). The NCTF also met the chief editors of the leading national newspapers, private and public electronic media, and made the same appeal to the media (DU Correspondent, 2007). The issue was also put forward through the National Children's Parliament session.

As a result, during Child Rights Week 2007 the Prime Minister made an announcement to stop involving children and young people in political demonstrations. The children and young people received active support from the INGO and in partnership with the adult staff throughout the processes of lobbying and advocacy with government and civil society organisations.

Thus, the NCTF appeared to be creating 'new democratic spaces' for children and young people for personal and social transformation (see also, Percy-Smith, 2010), which were rooted in children and young people's everyday lived realities. The empowerment of young people took place through the development of a critical consciousness of their situation exemplified in the NCTF initiatives. This way the NCTF acted as a catalyst to enable young people to interpret and respond to the environment they occupied, expressed

socially responsible opinions and contributed to bring about changes in the lives of children and young people in Bangladesh.

In this way the NCTF created space and opportunity for a participatory engagement structure for young people to engage themselves in various participatory initiatives and acted as a pressure group to influence policy. Drawing on the policy network literature, Tisdall and Davis (2004: 134) argue that resources possessed by a pressure group are the key to attracting policy-makers to invite the group into policy-making.

Thus, the capacity of a pressure group to bargain to influence policy depends on its strengths and types of resources. In the examples of the NCTF, bridging across young people's networks and linking with local and national power structures, the NCTF generated necessary resources and provided bridging social capital for bringing out children and young people's diversified life experiences through inclusive communication to influence government policy decisions. As was evidenced in my research findings, the NCTF therefore represented a bottom-up and young people-led participatory space to feed evidence-influenced policy advocacy for children and young people at the national level.

The National Children's Parliament: space for democratic engagement

The National Children's Parliament (NCP) is a young people-led national-level network to identify, discuss and raise issues of children and young people's collective voices to influence the policy-making bodies of the government, NGOs, donors and civil society organisations for children and young people-sensitive policies and services in Bangladesh (SCA, 2009b). The NCP established an inclusive network of representative young people across the country to foster leadership qualities and skills, and generate young people-led research evidence through the district components of the National Children's Task Force (SCA, 2009e: 6).

Thus, the National Children's Parliament involved young people in democratic processes to address issues of children and young people's rights violations, and advocating for accessible and quality services for all children and young people in Bangladesh. In doing so, the NCP intended to influence policy-makers to prioritise children and young people's issues, increase the national budget allocation for children and young people and ensure

effective service delivery. The impact assessment report of the NCP highlighted the significance of its young people-led and bottom-up nature, noting that:

> The [Children's] Parliament was the culmination of consultations and dialogue at the district-level, and the network of Child Journalists did provide a rights monitoring mechanism, albeit ad hoc, in between the sessions. The NCTF was regarded as the base organisation and backbone for the Parliament, from where the elected CP [Children's Parliament] members were drawn…The [Children's] Parliament's strength was derived from the representation, knowledge, and linkages at the district level. (SCA, 2009b: 33)

The structure of the National Children's Parliament evolved in line with the needs of the participating children and young people. The idea of the National Children's Parliament originated from the Children's Council, discussed earlier in this chapter, which was established in Tangail district by the INGO in partnership with seven CBOs to address children and young people's issues at a local level. The Tangail 'Children's Access to Rights through Development (CARD)' project established a mechanism so that issues that were not addressed at the lower tier could be placed with and pursued by government officials at higher administrative levels in Tangail. This process enabled project participants to advocate for their issues such as the prevention of child marriage and increased coverage of birth registration in Tangail.

Nevertheless, the centralised political decision-making of the country revealed the limitations of case-by-case advocacy initiatives by the Children's Council at the district-level. As mentioned in the previous section, the participating children and young people of the CARD project strongly felt a greater need for advocacy at the national level to bring about changes in attitudes and practices towards children and young people in Bangladesh.

In response, the INGO under its CARD project organised a 'Shadow Session' of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002. In 2003, the INGO established the National Children's Parliament under its project called, 'Listen to Children's Voices' and since then had been holding issue-based Children's Parliament sessions annually.

The National Children's Parliament was initially represented predominantly by young people from the Children's Council in Tangail CARD project, including young people from 17 districts through networks of local non-governmental organisations. Gradually, the NCP expanded to all 64 districts of the country and represented young people from

diverse backgrounds, including young people from school-going, non-school going, working, growing up on the street, slum-dwellers, in brothels and NGO-run institutional care, with disabilities and from ethnic and religious minorities (SCA, 2009b: 14; 2009c).

The National Children's Parliament consisted of 154 members representing all 64 districts of the country. Two young people (one girl and one boy), aged 14 to 16 years, represent each district as well as 26 young people represent as additional members. The members of the NCP were elected by the general members of the NCP for two years. A Core Committee consisting of five members and two advisors coordinated all national activities in cooperation with the 14-member Steering Committee and 16-member District Core Groups.

The Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and representatives of the NCP are selected by members of the District Committees of the National Children's Task Force (NCTF), which exists in all 64 districts of the country. The National Children's Parliament is therefore supported by the district-level components of the National Children's Task Force District Committees, which act as a local-level watchdog for monitoring and reporting violations and status of children and young people's rights (SCA, 2006b; 2009d: 13; 2009e: 5). Thus, the National Children's Parliament offered a democratic space for young people to represent, advocate, and promote children and young people's collective interests to influence public and development policies and services in Bangladesh.

Political consciousness: empowerment and accessing the power structures

The significance of the National Children's Parliament (NCP) lies in its bottom-up structure to represent the collective voices of children and young people at national- level policy-making bodies. By supporting the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) in districts and divisional dialogues with responsible adults, the NCP explored local-level children and young people's issues and acted as a watchdog for children and young people's rights. The issues identified at local levels were presented at the 64 district and six divisional-level Public Hearing sessions and at the Round Table sessions with the government administration.

Public Hearing and Round Table sessions are meetings organised by the district-level NCP and NCTF Core Committees to create awareness of local-level children and young people's issues with government officials, civil society organisations and media

representatives and advocacy for addressing child rights violations. Topics included in the Public Hearing and Round Table sessions were child marriage, various forms of abuse and exploitation including eve-teasing, children and young people in poverty and hazardous work, education, physical punishment at schools, problems in getting text books and new assessment and examination systems, education quality and pressure to get private tuition, health and sanitation at schools, birth registration, and drug and substance abuse.

Finally, the National Children's Parliament accessed the national-level power structures through holding thematic parliamentary sessions for policy advocacy. During 2003 to 2014, the NCP held fourteen sessions to influence government policies and services based on issues such as a budget for children and young people, quality education, health, banning abuse of children and young people in hazardous political activities, physical punishment at schools and ensuring birth registration. In the 2014 National Children's Parliament session organised in collaboration with the UNDP, the British Council and the National Parliamentary Secretariat, the young parliamentarians raised two issues affecting their lives. They are enacting laws for 'banning corporal punishment' and 'a separate Children's Commission' (Personal correspondence with the Program Officer, Save the Children International in Bangladesh, 12.09.2014).

Therefore, the National Children's Parliament (NCP) emerged as a young people-led policy advocacy tool to voice children and young people's concerns and interests to duty bearers such as the government. The young representatives gained political consciousness through various processes of the NCP with active support in partnership with the INGO and CBO staff members. The empowerment agenda inherent in the NCP involved the following steps.

Two months prior to the National Children's Parliament session, the Steering Committee met in the capital city Dhaka to identify topics for the annual session. Once topics were selected, the young people, with active support from the trained young facilitators, who were graduated from the NCP, developed survey questionnaires on topics identified at the district level. Then the 64 district members of the NCP administered a situation analysis survey to illuminate the status of children and young people's rights around the identified topics in the respective districts. The Steering Committee of the NCP analysed the survey information and produced a Working Paper for the NCP session. The Working

Paper was circulated among all NCP district representatives one week prior to the NCP session.

The Core Committee of the National Children's Parliament (NCP) met two weeks prior to the session to meet a range of dignitaries at national level in the capital city Dhaka. The objectives of these meetings were two-fold: to obtain an in-depth exploration of the issues identified through the district-level survey and to get the perspectives of the dignitaries to help the young people frame the recommendations for the NCP session. The dignitaries included politicians, academics, human rights activists and journalists. During this meeting period with the dignitaries, the Core Committee of the NCP reviewed news from national and international media sources in support of their findings to be presented through the National Children's Parliamentary session. All 64 young parliamentarians arrived in the capital city two days before the NCP session and participated in group discussions on the final Working Paper of the year NCP session, and formulated possible questions to raise in the NCP session.

The National Children's Parliament (NCP) sessions commenced with the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Children's Parliament presenting the Working Paper of the year followed by a response by the Chief Guest representing the government. Each young parliamentarian then asked a question to the Chief Guest. The NCP sessions were attended by various stakeholders including government officials, human rights activists, development organisations, electronic and print media. The young parliamentarians thus had the opportunity to engage the concerned adults in discussing issues of concern to children and young people. The NCP sessions concluded with the young parliamentarians producing a formal statement of recommendations for submission to the government.

Soon after the concluding session of the NCP, a small panel of young parliamentarians presented their recommendations and answered questions through a media conference, involving television and journalists from all of the major government and private print and electronic media channels in the country. On next day, the Core Committee of the NCP submitted the recommendations of the NCP session to the government's Parliamentary Standing Committees to review and consider for public policies and services (SCA, 2009b: 16; 2009e: 10-11).

The National Children's Parliament (NCP) therefore had the potential to influence national policies and services through advocating and raising collective voices to the highest policy-making bodies of the government. With the young people-led research, monitoring and reporting mechanisms underpinning it, the NCP created a political space for representing children and young people's experiences, concerns and perspectives at the national level. For example, some changes have taken place in recent years in children and young people-related national policies in Bangladesh.

First, the recommendation of the National Children's Parliament on 'stopping physical punishment in schools' (the theme for NCP sessions in 2005 and 2006) contributed to the enactment of a national policy to abolish physical punishment in all educational institutions in the country by a government order (GOB, 2010a; Staff Correspondent, 2010, 2011). Such an achievement complemented the ongoing advocacy and lobbying with the government by some human rights organisations in the country to ban physical punishment in educational institutions. In 2010, two leading human rights organisations specialising in legal aid called 'Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust' and 'Ain O Salish Kendra' filed public-interest litigation against the government to take steps to declare physical punishment at schools illegal. The litigation was filed after a ten year-old boy committed suicide after he had been beaten by his teacher, which was reinforced by ongoing news coverage of physical punishments in schools across the country.

Second, in 2008, the National Children's Parliament (NCP) held a session on 'stopping exploitation of children and young people in political activities' discussed in the previous section, an issue identified at the local level by the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) in 2007. In 2008, the Core Committee of the NCP met the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition Political Party, and the Advisor to the Caretaker Government. The representative young people submitted the recommendations of the NCP urging political leaders to ban the use of children and young people in hazardous political activities in the political parties' election manifestos (SCA, 2009b: 24).

The NCP lobbying and advocacy supported by media coverage led the government to enact a policy on banning the involvement of children and young people in political activities in the National Child Policy 2010 (GOB, 2011). Consequently, both the major political parties, the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist

Party (BNP), included a ban on using children and young people in political activities in their respective election manifestos in 2008 (BAL, 2008: 10; BNP, 2008).

Third, the NCP recommended through its 2010 NCP session on 'education and governance' to include education as a fundamental right for children and young people in the Constitution of Bangladesh. This issue was also already identified and reported by other development organisations in the country. In response, on 26 September 2010, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education of the Bangladesh government proposed in the National Parliament Session to submit a bill to include education as a fundamental right to be recognised in the Constitution (SCA, 2011).

Finally, in 2010, the government circulated an order to distribute free text books to secondary school students (GOB, 2010b) — an issue advocated by both NCP and other human rights organisations for a long time. Since its first session in 2003, the NCP had been advocating for free text books for secondary school students. The NCP recommendations, along with advocacy by other development organisations for free text books, might have influenced government policy to make provision for free secondary school text books.

The above examples suggest ways in which the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament provided bonding and bridging social capital and connected these young people's networks to micro and macro power structures to influence policies and services that affect children and young people in Bangladesh (SCA, 2011).

Therefore, the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) and the National Children's Parliament (NCP) offered an inclusive space for children and young people's participatory engagement and representation in local and national-level decision-making. In this way, these young people-led networks were instrumental in creating a 'participation web' (Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006) to represent the multiplicity of voices of children and young people rooted in children and young people's lived experiences. Through democratic representation the NCTF and the NCP prevented exclusion based on various social differences and diversities among young people and ensured inclusive communication (see also, Young, 2000). The empowerment agenda

inherent in these micro- and macro-level participatory structures enabled young people to achieve necessary functioning to engage in democratic processes.

Thus, these networks enabled the young people to exercise a degree of political power on their own behalf (for instance, Wall, 2011: 88). In this way, the Children's Council, the NCTF and the NCP provided political spaces for young people to exercise their active citizenship through exchanges of information, perspectives and resources (see also, Carlson and Earls, 2011: 227) with peers as well as with other significant adult members in the society, especially those who hold the power bases. This practice resembles the expanded notion of citizenship found in Habermas (1984; 1987: 20-23) that emphasises democratic procedures that value reason and an open exchange of ideas as a basis for legitimate governance.

Despite these successes, there are criticisms of children and young people's participatory structures that fail to be inclusive of a diversity of voices. For instance, in the context of the UK, Wyness (2009b: 535) argues that the practice of electoral forms of participation in young people's institutions reinforces existing inequalities between groups of young people and is less likely to include a diversity of voices of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups of young people. Likewise, in the case of children and young people's networks analysed in this chapter, there are some criticisms.

For instance, although all three networks, the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament, greatly ensured diversity of voices of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups, the leadership positions in these networks were heavily dominated by older and articulate young people, young people who were easy to access and who were not from socially excluded groups. Therefore, the practices of networks somehow reinforced existing inequalities between groups of young people as evident in the statement of a former Peer Educator of the Children's Council:

> Why do you [INGO/CBOs] always look for Sabbir [an older, vocal and articulate boy leader]? If you really want, you will see that there are many Sabbir around you. But you will not look for us. You will only facilitate those who are older and vocal. Look at the Child Council leaders— mostly, they all are older and articulate boys and girls. (Interview, Boy, aged 18, 01.02.2008)

Similar comment was also evident in the statement of a Director of one CBO:

> What can we do? It is the nature of the job that demands older and vocal children so that they can represent in meetings, trainings, consultations, forums and run their committees. Also, we have very limited resources in terms of finance, human and time to develop new children as leaders as well as those who are hard-to-reach. It is far easier to invite those children who have already been developed as leaders than developing new children within a short period. Frankly speaking, we often tend to invite those children who are already leaders, have leadership qualities, articulate, vocal and easily accessible. (Interview, 12.10.2007)

Likewise, the INGO Program Manager also expressed the demand for articulate, vocal and older young people to meet the specific need of representing children and young people's issues at various forums (Ahsan, 2009: 394).

The above findings suggest several implications for children and young people's participation in collective decision-making in public spaces. First, despite some limitations, networks play an important role in developing new structures and policies to facilitate the creation or renewal of children and young people's civic engagement (Putnam, 2000: 23, 403). In regards to children and young people's participation, it is therefore important to address both the supply of opportunities for children and young people's civic engagement and the demand for those opportunities.

Establishing community-based informal as well as formal networks such as the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament are thus significant for capturing children and young people's diversified lived experiences. As such, public and development policies need to target support for building bonding and bridging social capital through children and young people's networks to enhance the quality of public debate in children and young people-related decisions at the local and national level (see also Putnam, 2000: 363).

Second, developing children and young people's critical consciousness through empowering agendas can ensure sustainability of personal and social transformation initiatives. As such, children and young people's participation in decision-making needs to be reconceptualised not only as social relations but also as political relations in terms of sharing power (see also, Thomas, 2007). In this regard, separate participatory structures such as the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament have the potential for making the general parliamentary structure

more responsive to children and young people's interests by feeding evidence-influenced policy advocacy (see also, Wall, 2011: 88).

Third, instead of considering children and young people's participation as an autonomous activity, it is crucial to recognise the role of adults in supporting children and young people to achieve necessary functioning to participate in various participatory mechanisms. Children and young people's participatory agendas therefore must be well supported by skilled partners, adults and peers, in the preparation, facilitation and accompaniment of participatory processes including lobbying and policy advocacy. Therefore, the role of adults is crucial in children and young people's participation in decision-making, which suggests reconsidering partnership between children and young people and adults rather than seeking for authentic participation through independence from adults (see also, White and Choudhury, 2010: 48-49; Carlson and Earls, 2011: 225; Shier et al., 2014).

Conclusions

In this chapter I have demonstrated that children and young people's networks, the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force, and the National Children's Parliament, were instrumental in creating a 'participation web' (Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006) to represent the multiplicity of opportunities and forms of participation rooted in children and young people's everyday life experiences. By providing bonding and bridging social capital, these networks offered 'opportunity spaces' (Percy-Smith, 2010: 116) as a setting for children and young people's personal and social transformation. In line with Moss and Petrie (2002: 9), I have shown that these spaces were not only 'physical spaces' as a setting for children and young people but also other forms of space for children and young people's political participation. The spaces served in terms of 'social space'—a domain of social practices and relationships, and a 'cultural space' where values, rights and cultures are created and contested.

The networks also offered a 'discursive space' to ensure children and young people's diversified perspectives and forms of expression. In such a discursive space, there was room for children and young people to enter into dialogue with adults and peers, exchange different views and experiences and exercise critical thinking, where children and young people expressed their views and some of their perspectives were heard by the adult duty bearers. Therefore, I have demonstrated that despite some limitations children and young

people shared power to some extent with adults, and participatory structures were inclusive of children and young people's diverse experiences to a greater extent.

There are criticisms in the literature of participatory initiatives that emphasise the effectiveness of structures and processes of governance (for instance, Gaventa, 2007) through creating or extending children and young people's representative structures (Percy-Smith, 2010: 110). In order for children and young people's access to various forms of resources and negotiate with power structures, I have demonstrated that informal structures such as the Children's Council at grassroots-level provided necessary bonding social capital to organise children and young people and offered limited bridging social capital by extending networks across the district. By extending networks across the country and connecting to macro power structures, both the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament provided necessary bridging social capital to impact on macro policy structures in order to help children and young people to move out of their limited circumstances at the local level.

Therefore, by providing bonding and bridging social capital at different scales, both informal and formal networks have the potential to offer different leverage for enabling children and young people's socially situated lived realities for democratic discussion and decision-making at both local and highest policy-making bodies. Drawing on the policy network literature and empirical evidence, Tisdall and Davis (2004: 136) suggest that promotional groups, which speak on behalf of or for the poor, are more effective than representational groups, made up of the poor themselves. It is argued that promotional groups demonstrate better professional expertise in pressure group activity than representational groups.

In the context of three case studies that I presented in this chapter, the Children's Council represents a combination of characteristics of both representational and promotional groups whereas the National Children's Task Force and the National Children's Parliament represent as promotional groups. In line with Wyness (2009b), my findings suggest that both forms of participation through informal and formal structures rooted in children and young people's daily life experiences offer different approaches to accommodate childhood diversities.

The above findings have several implications for children and young people's participation, especially in collective decision-making in public spaces. First, both formal and informal networks are important in creating opportunities for children and young people's participatory engagement in democratic processes. By providing bonding social capital the informal networks help creating bridging social capital to support the more formal structures and mechanisms for children and young people's engagement and building connections across sectoral boundaries. These types of informal and formal networks thus have the potential for means of political opportunities and mobilisation for social change, and reveal paradoxes within existing systems of power (see also, Taylor and Percy-Smith, 2008: 388).

Therefore, in order to address inherent power issues, structures of children and young people's participation must include educational and empowerment approaches, which are built on children and young people's own perceptions to develop their political consciousness from below—what Freire (1970: 14, 16) called the 'pedagogy of the oppressed'. This idea suggests the creation of a congenial environment so that children and young people can develop necessary functioning to solve problems, think critically, and communicate and negotiate effectively with adults as well as with peers in various social positions, thereby empowering themselves to participate in individual and collective decision-making (Hart, 2008b; Percy-Smith, 2010: 119).

The above form of new governance spaces from the bottom-up—what Cornwall (2004) terms 'popular spaces', that is, those created by children and young people themselves, necessitates active support by adults to reach children and young people's subjective experiences and voices. It also suggests the need for collaboration and dialogue between children, young people and adults and between communities and agencies for bridging interaction between children, young people and adult society, and linking back of children and young people's popular spaces into mainstream political structures.

Second, it is necessary for individuals and services to ensure effective participation which requires adequate institutional processes in creating necessary conditions for children and young people's meaningful participation (see also, Bessell, 2009a; Percy-Smith, 2010: 119). Children and young people taking responsibility has implications for child-adult relations. First, it necessitates positive attitudes of adults towards children and young people's abilities and act without undue interference by adults (Percy-Smith, 2010).

Second, adults need necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to offer effective scaffolding to ensure children and young people's meaningful participation. Therefore, the participatory process underlies the need to build capacity not only for communities such as children and young people but also power holders such as adults to effectively respond to children and young people (Taylor, 2007: 388).

Third, it is important to critically evaluate how opportunities for children and young people's participation are played out in practice. It necessitates a rethinking of social spaces and power embedded in relational contexts in order to enable children and young people's active engagement in sharing, learning and change in partnership with adult members of the community and society. The potential of children and young people's networks points to ideas of governance in which power is viewed as more fluid and is negotiated between partners (Taylor, 2007: 300).

Therefore, instead of viewing it as an autonomous action, children and young people's participation in decision-making needs to be reconceptualised as a relational process (see also Percy-Smith, 2010: 117) of sharing responsibilities and power, which Cockburn (1998) defines as interdependent model of children and young people's active citizenship. Finally, it is significant that formation of social capital is a basis for both public and development policies and programs (Maclure and Sotelo, 2014: 385-386) to ensure children and young people's systematic participation, especially in collective decision-making.

In the subsequent Chapters (Six, Seven and Eight), I examine children and young people's relationships with their families, society and the state to illuminate structures and processes that constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh.

Chapter 6 Protection, obligation and reciprocity: children and young people's participation in interdependent family relations

> What agents can do or cannot do depends very much on their position in relations of production and …in other forms of social relations in the state and civil society.
>
> (Clegg, 1989:145)

Introduction

This chapter draws attention to the cultural construction of parent-child relations in Bangladesh and therefore the relational influence on children and young people's participation in personal decision-making. In doing so, it examines what children, young people and adults value in familial relationships, and the way social values intersect with the choices children and young people actually make regarding their participation in personal decision-making. It argues that the particular socioeconomic and political context shapes what parents and children are able to do, which limits children and young people's agency and their opportunities to participate in making personal decisions.

On the one hand, parent-child relationships focus on the responsibility of parents to ensure children and young people's protection from harm, abuse and risks (Crivello and Boyden, 2014: 380), or what Salo (2009) identifies as protective relations. This type of protective relations is premised in the context of a dangerous society that creates real vulnerability of people, particularly young people, and specifically of girls, which limits children and young people's agency in influencing personal decisions. Neither parents nor children and young people have any control over this context that greatly shapes parent-child interactions and children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making.

On the other hand, parent-child relations in Bangladesh are characterised by hierarchical power relations premised on obedience and conformity to parents and reciprocity in familial relationships. Parent-child relations in Bangladesh can be understood through the lens of a moral economy of paying gratitude to parents that fosters intergenerational mutuality (see also, Abebe, 2013; Morrow, 2013b: 267; Vergara et al., 2014: 86). Accordingly, the chapter demonstrates that parent-child relations are tied up with intergenerational contracts (Kabeer, 2000: 465), which is an integral part of

intergenerational relations (Trommsdorff and Kornadt, 2003: 278-279) in Bangladeshi society. Such intergenerational relations are not only influenced by experiences of past and present parent-child interactions but also the expected development of parent-child relations in future. The future orientation in parent-child relations shapes parent-child interactions and relations and experiences of children and young people's participation in family level decision-making in the present.

The specific characteristic of these parent-child relations in Bangladesh is relatedness which underlies collectivism and an interdependent self or interdependent identity (see also, Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Rothbaum and Trommsdorff, 2007: 463). Equally important, gender and generation are the key structuring factors that regulate parent-child relations in Bangladesh. The chapter concludes by arguing that such structuring factors greatly shape children and young people's access to various material and non-material resources. Such lack of access constrains children and young people's opportunities to participate in personal decision-making and the actual choices that children and young people make regarding personal decisions such as education, marriage, friendship, social life, and time use.

Additionally, class, geography, religious beliefs, ethnicity, caste, children and young people's physical attributes, as well as parental education and employment status, also intersect with gender and generation. The influence of this intersectionality disadvantages girls and boys differently regarding their opportunities to influence personal decision-making at the family level.

This chapter is structured into two sections. The first section explores how the particular socio-political context of violence and intimidation, oppression and police corruption presents a dangerous society that creates real vulnerability of people in general and young people and especially girls in particular, which limits children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in personal decisions. It shows how children and young people's opportunities to express their views and have those views taken into account are significantly constrained by parental responsibilities to protect children and young people's needs and interests in the context of risk and danger associated with public spaces.

Thus, considering risk and danger in society, children and young people themselves restrict their desires to pursue personal goals and limit their choices on decision-making. It demonstrates that children and young people's real vulnerability to danger, harm and abuse shapes parent-child interactions and reveals a tension between children's rights and opportunities to participate in private decision-making and parental responsibilities for children and young people's protection. Parental concerns for children and young people's protection include concerns about over-burdening children and young people with participatory responsibilities; losing control over children and young people; and negative impacts of participation on children and young people.

The second section focuses on how familial and societal norms and values regarding children's obligations to give old-age security to their parents shape parental goals of child socialisation. It shows that the implicit intergenerational contracts underpinned by collectivism and reciprocity create an interdependent familial relationship in Bangladesh. I argue that such interdependency in parent-child relationships contributes to developing children and young people's relational selves or identity as compliant and self-controlled as discussed in Chapter Two. Children and young people's relational identity and roles within familial relationships place children and young people in a hierarchical social position which is subject to parental authority.

I conclude that children and young people have narrow spaces to manoeuvre in participating in personal decision-making in interdependent familial relationships. Nevertheless, children and young people demonstrate their capacity to make choices through the internalisation of social norms and values of duty, obligation, reciprocity and interdependence. In this way, children and young people engage with social structures and regulate their behaviour in expressing personal choices in making decisions in areas such as education, marriage, career choice, friendship, recreation, time use, and social life.

Vulnerability limits agency: tensions between protection and participation

This section examines how the particular socio-political context in Bangladesh creates real vulnerability for children and young people in limiting their agency and opportunities to participate in personal decision-making. It argues that in the context of a dangerous society, children and young people in Tangail limit their behaviour to pursue personal

desires which is further constrained by parental rights and responsibilities towards protecting their children's best interests. Other cross-cultural studies also observe this tension between protection and participation in parent-child relations which significantly constrain children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making within families (Moses, 2008; Bessell, 2009a; Alderson, 2010: 93; Baraldi, 2010: 281; Jamieson and Mukoma, 2010: 81; Jones and Welch, 2010:136; Kirby and Sophie, 2010: 119; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010a: 358-359; Twum-Danso, 2010). In this thesis, protection refers to safeguarding children and young people's morality, requiring them to act in socially expected ways, and safeguarding children and young people from real vulnerability to sexual abuse, general harm, neglect and risks such as accidents (see also, Svevo-Cianci et al., 2011).

In Bangladesh parent-child relations are based on the notion of duty of care by parents. The extent to which children and young people are able to participate in personal decision-making therefore must be seen in the context of the parent-child relationship. Accordingly, the parent-child relationship in Bangladesh is infused with paternalism and thus necessarily implies asymmetrical power relations. In this familial relationship, power is relational and is understood as 'the capacity to influence others' (Scott, 2001:138) whereas paternalism refers to a form of beneficence that is devoid of the perspectives of recipients (Calder, 1995:750).

Drawing on the idea of paternalism and partnership (Calder, 1995; Bessell and Gal, 2009), the following section argues that children and young people's opportunities to influence in personal decision-making is significantly constrained by the exercise of parental positive power to protect their children's best interests especially in the context of a risk society. Parental responsibility for children's protection reveals three main concerns: concerns about over-burdening children and young people with participatory responsibilities; concerns about losing control over children and young people; and concerns over negative impacts of participation on children and young people.

In the following section I discuss how adults' concerns about over-burdening children and young people with participatory responsibilities constrained young people's opportunities to participate in personal decision-making.

Concerns about over-burdening children and young people

Concerns of parents about over-burdening their children with participatory responsibilities restricted young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making. Other researchers have also highlighted similar concerns that children and young people's participation would deny them their childhood (Morrow, 1999:10; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010b). Parents, especially in Tangail city areas, expressed concerns that participation was time and energy-consuming for their children, who were already over-burdened with educational responsibilities. For instance, a mother in my study reported that:

> Whenever the CBO staff comes to invite Piya [daughter, aged 12] for the Child Council program activities, without even asking Piya, I inform the CBO staff that Piya is not at home. I do this because I do not want my daughter to waste her precious time in the Child Council programs. Piya has to compete for getting admitted into a cadet school next year. Her days are heavily packed up by educational private tuition and home work. (Interview, Piya's parents, 05.01.2008)

In line with her mother's concerns about over-burdening children and young people, Piya commented that:

> I would like to attend Child Council programs and the NGO wants me to attend all the good programs that are especially held at district and national levels. But I cannot afford much time to spend in activities other than in my study. My mum is also right that I do not have time to even die. I have to attend multiple private tuitions daily and I feel like I will die one day due to meeting all these educational demands. One of my teachers says, Piya, 'you will be a martyr one day as a result of working so hard'. I smile in response. What can I do? If I do not study hard, I will not be able to achieve good results in the examination and I will lose the opportunity to get admission into a cadet school. (Interview, girl, aged 12, 05.01.2008)

Similarly, complexities associated with children and young people's participation in personal decision-making such as involvement in social life and the challenges of meeting educational demands was also strongly evident in meetings with community people. For instance, a group of community resource persons (CRP) did not allow their own children to participate in the Children's Council activities. One CRP member expressed a concern that was shared by others:

> I need to make sure that my daughter has good achievements in the examination. There is tough competition. If I let her involved in the Child Council activities, she will not be able to concentrate on her study and will not achieve what she has been achieving now. Her attention will be diverted. As a parent, I need to protect her interest. (FGD with CRP, 07.09.2007)

Similarly, a CBO staff member, who accompanied me in my entire fieldwork in Tangail, refused to allow her son (aged 15 in Class Nine) to be involved in this research. She gave him no choice at all as evident in the following statement:

> I do not need to ask him [Rafiq, boy aged 15] whether he wants to participate in your research. I am telling you that my son does not have a single moment to spare. Even he does not go out for playing with others. He is the first boy in his class. After school, he has to attend five private tuitions in a week. Even though he is a Chairman of the local Child Council, I do not allow him to attend any meetings of the Child Council. (Interview with parents, 10.12.2007)

In a courtesy meeting with me at his house, Rafiq did not oppose his mother's concern nor did he show any frustration at not being able to participate in his personal decisions such as attending the Children's Council activities. Instead, Rafiq seemed to have accepted his parental authority to meet educational demands at the expense of pursuing his personal desires as he commented, 'It is OK with me that I do not go out or participate in any programs. I listen to what my parents say for my own good'. (10.12.2007)

It can be argued that the above examples which show young people's compliance with parental control and authority point to the challenges arising from a neoliberal policy agenda of result and future-oriented educational performance that pushes children and young people to compromise their present needs and desires such as choices over education, leisure, recreation, social activities and use of time.

Interestingly, the findings from the above examples contradicted the attitude survey findings which show that the majority of adult participants (85.4 percent) in my study disagreed with the statement, 'It is a burden for children to participate in decision-making'. Nevertheless, when the issue was intensively discussed at the individual level and in group settings, the adults perceived the issue more objectively and were able to comprehend their own opinions given in attitude survey on the same topic. This finding points to the limitation of making conclusions based on exclusively quantitative style survey questions that leave no opportunity for the participants for reflection and comprehension. The adult participants perceived and admitted various benefits of participation for their children. Yet, their concerns about over-burdening children and young people outweighed the potential benefits that participation could bring for their children. These apparently contradictory opinions point to a nuance that while participation can be a burden for children, it is also worthwhile. Yet, although benefits may outweigh the burden, the burden remains for children and young people. The nature

and extent of burden depends on the type of spaces of participation, how frequently, on what issues, mode and location of participation.

In the context of my research, children and young people's participation at family-level decision-making can be considered as less over-burdening than participation in the NGO program activities, which is time and energy-consuming for children and young people, especially given their particular socioeconomic context. Generally, children and young people's opportunities for participation in decision-making are constrained in both private and public spaces at varied degrees on the grounds of protecting children and young people's greater interests as well as the interest of the household.

Unlike adults, some young people, especially leaders of the Children's Council, considered that participation was not a burden for them at all. The young people considered that they could balance competing agendas in their lives such as education and attending the Children's Council programs of various participatory processes at the local, district and national levels. However, the young people also recognised the extra time and energy needed for participation, especially in public programs such as training, consultations, seminars, meetings and activities that are organised away from their locality.

For some other young people, they reported that they were registered members of the Children's Council but were not regular participants. This group of young people only attended activities when there were special programs offered by the Children's Council at local level such as debate or essay competitions and training in their schools. These young people were mainly members of the educated middle class with both or one parent in the formal job market, and who were studying in the best two schools in Tangail. This particular group of young people reported that due to study pressure, they could sleep only four to six hours and did not have enough time and space to play and socialise including participating in regular Children's Council programs. While these young people have a greater say in personal decisions such as about marriage, education, food and clothes, they hardly had any choice in how they used their time and in their desire to participate in social life.

In contrast, girls and boys from mainly farming and day labour backgrounds in the remote rural setting in Tangail reported that they did not have such pressure on how they use their

time and in relation to socialising. This particular group of young people also did not have much pressure on educational performance, could spend time at the Children's Council programs, could socialise with friends and had enough time for sleep and recreation. Nevertheless, girls, especially in this group, did not have any choice over marriage decisions and boys over involvement in family farming.

Girls and boys from different ethnic minority groups in my study reported similar experiences of less pressure on education, more control over how they use their time, more control over socialisation and maintaining friendship within ethnic minority community. Some leaders of the Children's Council (boys, 15 to 17 years) reported that the necessity to support or work for their families created tensions. These young people described a clash between their desire to attend school and participate in the Children's Council programs and the demand for them to spend time in household labour. Such a clash exposed these young people to parental pressure, which constrained their choices in making decisions in terms of participation in education and social life. The following comment was echoed by the experiences of many other older boys in my study:

> 'Why do you need to go to school? Does your school bring us food when we starve? Why do you want to go to Child Council? Does your Child Council help us when we are in crisis? Do not have you any empathy for your poor father who works so hard for hand-to-mouth existence? Instead of spending time in school or in Child Council, cannot you help me in our farm? I cannot afford hiring a labour to work with me'. You know, when we hear such comments made by our parents especially fathers, it breaks our heart, and sometimes it makes us angry. We cannot do anything, not pursuing things that we value doing. We too understand the pain of our parents. (Sohag, boy aged 16, FGD with Tangail District Children's Council leaders, 20.12.2007)

The above example shows how young people regulate themselves in pursuing personal desires. They also reveal young people's experiences in balancing the competing demands of home and school. In the context of children's schooling in Andhra Pradesh, India, Morrow (2013b: 258) notes similar tensions that children and young people experience in balancing school attendance and school performance to meet future expectations of contributors with their current responsibilities to their families.

Like over-burdening, parental concerns about losing control over children also constrain children and young people's agency and opportunities to influence decisions as discussed in the following section.

Concerns about losing control over children and young people

Mostly the adult participants in my research expressed concern that an absence of adult control over children can make children and young people vulnerable to various risks and expose them to negative consequences. For example, adult fears include the possibility that children and young people may develop associations with local *mastans* or extortionist groups who are under the shelter of local political parties. This may result in children and young people's academic performance deteriorating; children and young people may become addicted to cigarettes, drugs, and may involve themselves in antisocial activities such as crimes. Adults also fear that a loss of control over children may result in young people developing romantic relationships with someone opposite sex.

While the above concerns are genuine for children and young people's protection, the common adult attitude towards children and young people is expressed in phrases such as 'what do they [children and young people] know?' or 'they do not understand anything'. Such attitudes towards children as 'not-knowing subjects' to protect themselves or as 'lacking understanding of the differences between good and bad aspects of life' position children and young people firmly under adult benevolent authority and control.

Thus, the idea of taking children and young people's perspectives into account during decision-making met resistance among the adult participants in my study as revealed in the following comment by a male community member reflecting the general views of many other adult participants:

> Children cannot always evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a decision and their context. They may give opinions without realising the negative consequences of their opinion. Thus, they may make wrong decisions which may be dangerous for their life. Children in our society are nurtured and cared and are made dependent on parents for a long time. Due to such protection and dependency, they do lack maturity and understanding about the positive and negative aspects of their life and real life issues to make right choices. (FGD with community members, 08.11.2007)

Adults' generational and social position within the family accords them considerable authority to protect children and young people's interests. Here, concern for children and young people's protection is premised based on children and young people's vulnerability to real and potential harm and danger. This particular form of protectionist attitude points to children and young people's social position which renders them squarely under adult control and positive power as exemplified in the following statements:

> If their [children and young people's] opinions are sought on every matter, they may become too arrogant and proud of themselves. They may consider themselves as too superior; they may become too independent, uncontrolled, undisciplined and insensitive. They will not value the opinion of others. They will not listen to parents and other adults in authority any longer. Thus, there is a danger that children will become over-empowered, over-confident, over-ambitious, over-motivated, over-smart, and over-matured. Such unlimited freedom can only bring danger to children; they may exceed their limit and cross their boundaries and may do things that will not beneficial for them. (Excerpts from attitude survey findings with adult Community Members, 2008)

Similar concerns were also evident in the following remark made by a parent and shared by many adult participants:

> If I ask my child's opinion on every decision, then his self-esteem and confidence may be enhanced too high, he may think that nothing is done without consulting me. Gradually, he may think that as my opinions are so valued, why I need to consult my parents? He may make such a decision that he has to suffer for rest of his life. This is our fear. (FGD, Community Members, 07.12.2007)

Thus, parent-child interactions in relation to children and young people's participation in personal decision-making take place in the context of paternalism within the protective role of parents. This practice can be seen in the way the ideology of Islam regarding parenting offers insights into why adults in Bangladesh appear to be paternalistic and very protective towards their children. Drawing on the *Qur'an*, many adult participants in my study pointed to the religious interpretation of parenting in Islam that:

> Children are considered to be property and thus a sacred trust under the custody of their parents and guardians. There is religious and traditional belief that it is the parental duty to ensure children's best interests; to look after children's wellbeing. It is exclusive rights of parents and guardians to make decisions for children as parents and guardians know what is good for their children and to offer highest protection. (Excerpts from attitude survey findings with adult Community Members, 2008)

Many adult participants held similar attitudes and beliefs regarding child rearing, drawing on an Islamic position that parental failure to protect their children from harm and being 'spoilt' under their guardianship contravenes the duties imposed upon parents as legal or moral guardians. For instance, some participants drew on the *Hadiah Sharif* which emphasises special parental duties towards children's protection under the consideration that children are unable to judge the 'real dangers' in childhood, which are considered to be harmful for children's life and development.

Thus, adult-child interactions in the familial space are influenced by broader sociocultural and religious beliefs and norms of socialisation. In the context of a society such as in Bangladesh, adults' understanding of the religious teaching to do with parenting appears

to sit uneasily with the vital aspect of protecting children's interests while not controlling children. Such a gap points to the nuance of the adult attitude between 'support and protection, on the one hand, and paternalism and control, on the other' (Bessell, 2009a: 309-310).

That is, promoting children and young people's participation in decision-making should not mean 'abandoning children of their rights', thereby making children and young people vulnerable (Bessell, 2009a). Instead, what children and young people need is to have parental or adult authority through guided autonomy in the form of support, guidance and protection (see also, Bessell, 2009a; Osler, 2010:106) to enable them to participate in decision-making. Nevertheless, as is evident in my research, parents may find it challenging to offer such guided autonomy to enable children and young people's participation in a context characterised by material poverty and high risk of abuse and harm in public spaces.

The following section shows that parental concerns about negative impacts of participation on children constrain children and young people's agency to express their desires and opportunities to participate and therefore the actual choices they make regarding their participation in personal decision-making.

Concern about negative impacts of participation on children and young people

Parental tensions over children and young people's protection from potential harm, abuse and the possible risks associated with being in a public space constrained children and young people's agency in influencing decision-making. In other contexts, researchers also note that parental concerns about risks in public spaces constitute significant constraints on children and young people's opportunities to participate in personal decision-making regarding friendship, socialising, and attending programs in public (see also, Mayall, 2002: 61; Baraldi, 2010: 281; Sarre, 2010:61; Evans and Holt, 2011; Tezel, 2011). For instance, an increased level of parental regulation of teenagers' autonomy is reported in many areas of children and young people's social lives such as in time use and mobility outside the home in Western societies.

The young people, especially in the semi-urban Tangail city areas, in my study reported that they were often refused permission to go out, play, enjoy sports and cultural

programs, visit fairs, or socialise with their peers in the neighbourhood due to fear of being harmed. There were parental concerns that neighbours might harm their children out of jealousy and competition for scarce resources for educational, job and other life opportunities. As a result, children and young people were also restricted in making friendships, and parents often dictated their choice of friends. Also, young people experienced restrictions regarding their desire to join or regularly attend the Children's Council program activities such as meetings, events, and travel to CBOs' and INGO's offices for training, meetings, workshops and conferences.

Apart from above concerns, parental concerns also included fear of road accidents and especially of boys joining in political parties and of girls losing moral character due to breaking *purdah* by not maintaining seclusion from males. Joining political parties is considered very harmful for children and young people in Bangladesh due to political violence as well as having bad associations. The members of political parties in Bangladesh are known as local extortionist groups who are mostly involved in antisocial activities and are patronised by the political leaders.

Thus, the main parental concerns that constrained children and young people's opportunities to participate in decisions regarding mobility outside the home, association and social life included fear of having bad associations and substance addiction of older boys. For older girls, the fear included sexual abuse, developing romantic relationships and losing morality. The gender aspect of this parental concern is reflected in the restricted physical mobility of especially older girls outside the home compared to that of boys. This gender differentiation in children and young people's experiences of constrained participation is more prevalent in semi-urban areas such as Tangail than in the urbanised capital city of the country.

Concern about drug and substance abuse

Parental concern about drug and substance abuse was one of the main reasons for adolescent boys being restricted in their choices in friendship, association, social life and time out. Drawing on examples of substance- and drug-addicted boys in their neighbourhoods, many parents in my study expressed concerns about the protection of their teenage boys. One mother, pointing to her neighbour, commented:

> They have money and she [mother of an adolescent boy] is knowledgeable and can talk about child rights. But she could not protect her own adolescent son who has become a drug addict,

> and now is in prison. That is why I do not allow my son [15 years] socialising with other boys. I always keep him under my eyes. The time is not good for our children. (Interview, Parents, 28.11.2007)

The effect of bad associations and peer influence on adolescent boys was also reflected in the following anecdote provided by Dhrubo, a boy aged 16, who was also a member of the Children's Council and a young journalist of the Children's Council. When Dhrubo was a Class Eight student, he first started smoking due to peer pressure, and gradually turned to drug and substance abuse. Eventually, Dhrubo became a school dropout and associated with a local political group. He reported:

> If I were not a member of the Child Council and had some trainings and good influences by some child leaders, it would have been impossible for me to disassociate myself from the political parties and stop all sorts of bad habits, it would have been impossible for me to come back to study… you would not have me for today's meeting… By now, I would have been totally spoilt. (Interview, 23.07.2007)

As a result, parents appeared to be very strict regarding allowing their children to socialise outside the home. The following comment by the mother of an adolescent boy in this study reveals parental concern regarding peer pressure, which results in restriction of children and young people's opportunities to influence personal decisions such as participation in social activities:

> How can he remain good if five of his friends of a good boy are bad? Obviously he will be dragged by his friends in their path. When my son goes out to attend Child Council programs, I do not know where he actually goes, who he actually socialises with. How can I be so assured that he ends up with the Child Council? He may be tempted by other friends on the way…drugs are available everywhere…everybody knows that there are many young boys in our localities who are heroin addicted…and that is why, I do not allow my son [15 years] to go out and socialise with others that much. (Interview, a mother, 26.11.2007)

Likewise, many community members in my study identified peer pressure as being one of the main reasons that adolescent boys experienced greater restrictions over personal decisions regarding socialisation, choice of friends and participation in social and recreational activities as also expressed in the following statements:

> There are risks involved if children go out for social life. Especially the older children [boys] may become involved with bad associations and lose their [moral] character. They can be involved in anti-social activities and risky behaviour such as drug and alcohol addiction and may end up being school dropouts. There is a greater risk and fear that older boys will be spoiled which will ruin their life. (Excerpts from Attitude Survey with adult Community Members, 2008)

Parents and community members in Tangail city areas were more concerned about drug abuse than were their counterparts in remote rural settings. Adolescent boys in Tangail city in my study in particular reported experiencing geographical restrictions relating to bad association and drug abuse. Here, gender, age, and geographical location are the main structuring factors for young people's, especially older boys', experiences of restrictions over personal decision-making such as time out, friendship and social life.

Parental concerns and young people's experiences in my study confirm reports and studies of the current drug and substance abuse situation in Bangladesh. For instance, drug abuse among adolescents has been identified as an emerging public health issue and social problem in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2010). Another study also identifies peer influence as the prime reason (56.6 percent) for injecting drugs among youth in Tangail (ICDDRB, 2008:32). Furthermore, about 80 percent of drug and substance addicts in Bangladesh are teenagers and young men aged 15 to 30 years (Firoz, 2010).

In contrast to the experience of adolescent boys, the opportunities of adolescent girls in social and public life were greatly constrained by parental concerns about a form of sexual abuse targeted towards especially older girls and women known as 'eve-teasing' as discussed below.

Fear of 'Eve-teasing'—protecting honour and avoiding shame

Eve-teasing is one of the major reasons that parents restrict the opportunities of their adolescent daughters to participate in personal decision-making such as education, marriage, socialisation and participation in social activities including the Children's Council programs. Eve-teasing is a form of sexual harassment or molestation of women and especially young girls on the street and in public places, such as around schools, colleges, universities and market places common in Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries (Rozario, 2004:16; Rashid, 2007; Islam, 2010).

The above protection concerns eventually constrained the adolescent girls in my study from participating in personal decision-making. Both girls as well as their parents are conscious of the perpetrators who are often partially educated unemployed youths in the locality, are mostly involved in local political groups and who work for political leaders. The factors responsible for sustaining this group's activities are entrenched in corruption within law enforcement agencies which are patronised by local political leaders (Hossain,

2010b). This means that these youths are not prosecuted and that the local political leaders patronise these youths for their own vested interests such as organising political activities, using them in political violence and in collecting extortion money.

There are indications that eve-teasing is a factor in the increasing numbers of suicides among school girls and sometimes suicides of their fathers due to loss of honour of their daughters that brings shame for the daughters as well as for the families. For instance, 15 girls committed suicide within a month due to eve-teasing-related harassment in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2010b).

Apart from physical, verbal and sexual assaults, extreme forms of eve-teasing include acid attacks, rape and murder of girls. There were over 5,000 reported incidences of rape in Bangladesh during 2002–2006. At least 2,000 of them were perpetuated against girl children. Of these, 625 girls were killed by the perpetrators after the girls had been raped and 69 girls committed suicide due to shame. Almost 90 percent of girls in Bangladesh aged 10 to18 have experience of eve-teasing (Weisfeld-Adams, 2008:2).

Considering the widespread incidence of female sexual abuse including eve-teasing, both parents and adolescent girls in my study agreed on the reasons for why parents often made crucial decisions on behalf of their daughters without consulting them. That fear for the safety of girls and fear that girls would lose their honour due to sexual harassment compelled many parents to make decisions about areas of girls' lives such as education and marriage.

Specifically, sexual harassment is reported to be one of the main reasons for adolescent girls' increased dropout rate from secondary school in Bangladesh (SCUK, 2005:15; Mamunur, 2007). Many adults and young people in my study noted that there were also instances where girls voluntarily became school dropouts either due to experience of sexual harassment or the potential risks of sexual harassment.

For instance, Joya (girl, aged 15 from a sweeper community) expressed her frustration that her gender, youthfulness, physical beauty and minority caste identity made her vulnerable to sexual abuse and thereby stopped her from pursuing her personal goal for education:

> My beauty is my greatest enemy. I had to become a school dropout when I was in Class Eight last year. Increasingly, it became difficult for me to attend the school unaccompanied. The boys [majority Bengali] used to disturb me on the way and my parents were so worried about my security and safety that something might happen one day. The boys were so daring because they knew that no one would be able to challenge them from my community. Now my parents are looking for my marriage. (Interview, 04.01.2008)

The above example reveals the legitimacy of parental fear about girls', especially adolescent girls' security, resulting in restrictions on adolescent girls' participation in personal decisions. In such a risky context, girls themselves restrict their agency in expressing or pursuing personal desires such as education, marriage and participation in social life. Consequently, compared to the majority Bengali young people, opportunity for ethnic and caste-based minority young people's participation in making decisions about their education or participation in social life is especially restricted in Bangladesh.

For example, a group of nine girls and boys from the Mandy ethnic minority community in my study expressed frustrations regarding their repression by ethnic majority Bengali people which constrained the Mandy children and young people's opportunities to participate in decisions regarding personal and social life. The young people from the Mandy ethnic community drew on many examples of sexual abuse, including abduction and rape of ethnic minority girls by Bengali youths. All these threats made ethnic minority children and young people, especially girls, less expressive and discouraged them from pursuing their desires to go out and participate freely in social life. The eldest boy (Shuvro, 17 years) in the group lamented:

> The Bengali youths are too daring that recently they abducted and raped a girl in front of her boyfriend in a solitary area in the local park. The Bengali youths also threatened the girl as well as her boyfriend that if they filed a case against them, they would kill the boy's and the girl's whole family… All these threats create tremendous psychological pressure on us and silence us. Following adults, we, the children too remain quiet and stay away from social lives. For us, it is a matter of life and death. (FGD with Mandy Ethnic Minority Group, 14.09.2007)

Therefore, young people in my study reported that they often regulated their desires and sometimes their parents discouraged and prevented them from participating in social life. For instance, Herima (Mandy ethnic minority girl, aged 15) expressed her frustration that 'although I have a great desire to observe village fair, I have never been allowed to go there since I have grown up' (FGD, 14.09.2007). Another Mandy girl (Joty, 16 years) commented that, 'I always think the consequences before I express myself to my parents, which makes me express nothing in most of the cases' (FGD, 14.09.2007). The examples

also show that like ethnic minorities in Bangladesh, minority people based on caste status such as sweeper, which is considered to be an untouchable community, also experience social exclusion and injustice. Therefore, gender crosscuts with caste, ethnicity, age and physical features, geographical location including other differentiations that disadvantage children and young people and especially older girls that constrain their opportunities and choices in personal decisions such as education, marriage and participating in social life.

In the face of actual incidences or potential threats of sexual abuse, many parents in Bangladesh, especially in semi-urban and rural areas, viewed marriage as the ultimate protection of their daughters (MOWCA, 2001:10; Weisfeld-Adams, 2008). As a result, 50 percent of girls in Bangladesh are not aware of their families' negotiations for their marriages (MOWCA, 2001:12). Therefore, a vast majority of girls have had no say in marital decisions. Several adult participants in my study challenged the practicality of delaying the marriage of their daughters until 18 years of age. The concern is expressed in the following comment by a father of an adolescent girl participant of my research:

> There are tremendous tensions that anything can happen at any time. The NGOs are advocating for not marrying our daughters off below the age of 18. But we are worried about *man-izzat* [honour-reputation] of our daughters, which is highly at risk. Who is going to ensure safety and security of my daughter if I wait until she is 18? (Kaseem, father of Mouri and Lavlu, Interview, 29.11.2007)

Also, not only girls but also the entire family can be at risk of the negative impact of eve-teasing which restricts young people's freedom of physical mobility in public and participation in personal decisions. This concern was expressed by Lavlu (boy aged 15) who reported that a few years ago local youths beat him up when he confronted them about teasing his older sister, Mouri, who was then 16 years. As a result, Lavlu had to restrict his movement outside home. In the interview, Lavlu and Mouri's father, Kaseem, lamented that any attempt to report the incident to the police would only make his whole family vulnerable to further abuse by the local *mastans*.

As mentioned earlier, *mastans* are those youths involved in antisocial and extortionist activities under the shelter of local political leaders and exempted by the law enforcement agencies. Pointing to police corruption, violence, intimidation and oppression under the shelter of political leaders, Kaseem expressed his frustration and fear that, '…if I report this incident to the police, then it will be difficult for me to live in this village along with

my family…we are hostages by the young gangsters of the locality' (Interview, 30.11.2007).

The above examples point to the 'blessings of petty leaders' that make local youth gangsters so powerful (Hossain, 2010b). Even if these young gangsters are arrested, they can easily be released by the police as they have familial connections with local political leaders who are involved in corruption. To illustrate, the community members in my study, especially in the semi-urban Tangail city, pointed to regular newspaper reports about incidences of extreme eve-teasing. The community members stated that parental concerns about acid attacks, rape and the killing of adolescent girls by youth gangs (see also, Islam, 2009) were one of the main reasons why parents placed greater restrictions especially on their adolescent daughters from joining in the Children's Council programs or participating in social activities.

Young people in my study reported that they experienced similar fears and appeared to understand and value parental concerns for their protection and thereby restricted their choices to pursue personal desires. Considering the consequences, older girls tend to restrict themselves from expressing their opinions such as about early marriage and participating in public or social life as evident in the following statement by a research participant and shared by many other girls:

> Not that we always say to our parents what we desire, for example, regarding visiting outside the home or attending any programs. We know how parents will react if we express that desire. Besides, we also think about the potential risks and therefore limit ourselves accordingly. (Girl, aged 15, FGD with the Sub-District Children's Council leaders, 03.01.2008)

Thus, young people make conscious decisions in regulating their emotions to pursue personal desires. The examples suggest that young people in my study appeared to have developed 'self-regulation' through reciprocal responsiveness in parent-child interactions and relations (see also, Maccoby, 2007: 35). One of the strategies that a majority of young girls in my study undertook was veiling themselves. For instance, in order to protect themselves from eve-teasing, girls as young as 11 years in my study started using the *burkah* to maintain *purdah*. That is, a type of 'self-socialization' (Bandura, 1986) can be observed among young girls to conform to social norms of being good to protect themselves from sexual harassment.

For example, one hundred percent of the *madrasha* girls and almost half of the girls who participated in my study used a *burkah*. While the *madrasha* girls expressed their religious obligation to wear a *burkah*, most of the other girls wore a *burkah* mostly by their choice in their particular living context. The girls in my study mentioned that they were not necessarily pressurised by family to wear a *burkah* but chose to do so to protect themselves from social evils such as eve-teasing. As the youngest participant in a FGD commented, '… we wear a *burkah* just to protect ourselves from the bad boys'. (FGD, Rupa, girl aged 11, 15.01.2008). Another girl, Mili, aged 16, reported that:

> My parents did not ask me to wear a *burkah* but I chose to do so. I was constantly negated by my parents to pursue my desires to attend various programs of Children's Council and to attend private educational coaching. Now my parents do not object me attending any programs and nobody disturbs me on the way. Interestingly, my mobility outside the home has been significantly increased since I have started wearing a *burkah*'. (FGD, Sub-District Children's Councils leaders, 10.01.2008)

This wider practice of using a *burkah* can be seen as young girls engaging in social norms and with local circumstances to regulate their behaviour, which shapes their experiences of participation in personal decision-making. This 'strategic-instrumental motive' (Rozario, 2004:43) of veiling oneself is identified as one of the reasons why there has a recent dramatic increase among young girls and women in Bangladesh in resorting to veil, which resonates with a more 'Islamic' identity.

Rozario offers three possible reasons for the instrumental value of veiling oneself: avoiding harassment, signalling that one is a good Muslim woman or girl, and being 'desirable' in the marriage market. Young girls in my study pointed to this instrumental value in their respective lives and in their engagement with the broader patriarchal sociocultural norms and values that shape girls' experiences of participation in personal decision-making.

In this section I have discussed three types of parental concerns about children and young people's protection that create tensions in parent-child relations in shaping children and young people's experiences of participation in personal decision-making. These are: concerns about over-burdening children and young people with participatory responsibilities, about losing control over children and young people, and about negative impacts of participation on children and young people. These concerns are premised in a socioeconomic and political context that offers very little material and non-material security and protection of children and young people as well as of their families. In such

a context, both parents and children and young people have hardly any choice but to constrict children and young people's agency in influencing personal decision-making. Young people's experiences and parental views in my study suggest that such practices are sometimes premised on protecting children and young people's future interests even at the cost of their present needs, wishes, desires and interests. Yet, both young people and adults in my study recognised such parental practices as positive and productive features of power relations (see also, Punch, 2005:174).

An analysis of these three types of concerns reveals several implications for children and young people's participation in family-level decision-making. First, concerns for children's protection in the context of danger in society points to the importance of recognising and addressing vulnerability of the external environment in which children and young people live, rather than categorising children and young people as inherently vulnerable, to enable them to participate in decision-making (for instance, Pells, 2012: 435).

Second, concerns for children and young people's protection are an issue that intersects with macro structural factors such as the influence of a neoliberal educational policy agenda of compulsory school attendance, and result and future-oriented educational performance in a context of poverty and limited supply of desirable jobs. Third, the alarming rate of gender-based violence in Bangladesh can be attributed to a reaction to girls' and women's greater participation in public life such as in the labour force (for instance, Lewis, 2011).

Therefore, it is important to analyse how age, gender, class, parental education and occupation, ethnicity, caste, geographic location and the type of decision intersect with the broader macro structures of social policy affecting education, gender, child labour and poverty reduction strategies and overall governance systems of the country. This analysis is crucial considering that the prevailing context limits children and young people's agency and creates disadvantages for children and young people in shaping their experiences of participation in personal decision-making.

Apart from their functional role as protectors, parents' role as providers also influences child socialisation based on their specific parental goals (see also, Punch, 2005). Parental goals of child socialisation of interdependence and relatedness place greater constraints

on children and young people's autonomy-seeking behaviour to pursue personal desires. As I have found in my data and as I discuss in the following section, children and young people's opportunities to participate in personal decision-making are profoundly shaped by children and young people's continuous negotiation with and conforming to their families and social worlds.

Intergenerational contracts: duty, obligation, reciprocity and interdependence

Children and young people's power to participate, influence and have control over personal decision-making lies in intergenerational and interdependent household relations. Duty, obligation, reciprocity, and interdependence are the norms and values which characterise parent-child relations in Bangladesh as they also do in many countries of the Global South (Punch, 2006; Abebe, 2008b; Bessell, 2009b: 529-530; Heissler, 2009; Twum-Danso, 2009; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010; Abebe, 2013).

Therefore, the concept of intergenerational contracts is useful in understanding children and young people's relationships within the family context. Intergenerational contracts refer to the 'shared understandings between family members as to what each owes and can expect from others within the family' (Kabeer, 2000: 465; Whitehead et al., 2007: 5). The core of intergenerational contracts is reciprocity or filial piety (Croll, 2006b: 474; Chi and Silverstein, 2011).

Thus, the idea of intergenerational contracts embraces relations between generations, especially parents and children. In parent-child relationships, two types of dependency spread over time shape intergenerational contracts between parents and children. These include infancy and childhood dependency on parents and parental dependency on their (adult) children during their infirmity and old age, which involve both material and emotional support. Such reciprocity and dependency can be equally applicable when children are still young.

In the absence of a welfare society, such intergenerational contracts and therefore intergenerational interdependency in familial relationships are strong in societies such as Bangladesh, as they are elsewhere in the Global South (see also, Abebe and Skovdal, 2010; Abebe, 2013). A lack of social security systems compels families in Bangladesh to

play a central role in ensuring assistance, support, welfare and security for household members (see also, Croll, 2006a: 1291-1292).

Drawing on the idea of intergenerational contracts, this section discusses how children and young people negotiate their positions and desires to influence personal decisions within the structure of parental resource power (see also, Punch, 2005:176). Two issues, parental concern for old-age security and concern for dowry for girls, are discussed to analyse how interdependency in familial relationships shapes children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in personal matters such as education, career choice, marriage, use of time, recreation, and social life.

I argue that interdependence in familial relationships contributes to creating relational identity (Brewer and Yuki, 2007; Markus and Hamedani, 2007) among children and young people. This relational identity makes children and young people compromise their own desires. I show that patriarchy, reinforced by religion and kinship systems, favours sons in Bangladesh, which contributes to shaping girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decision-making in private matters differently.

Lineage versus liability: girls' and boys' participation within patriarchal social structures

> Boys are considered to be the lineage of the family whereas girls are burdens. As a result, boys get the head of a fish and girls get the tail. If two siblings make a quarrel, the boy is excused whereas the girl gets punished. While boys will bring something [dowry] in for the family, girls will take things [dowry] away [on marriage]. There is no problem if someone has five sons. However, there is a serious problem if someone has even two daughters. (Female Community Member, Interview, 02.01.2008)

The above statement reveals the power of patriarchal social structures in Bangladesh that shapes girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decision-making differently. Weber's (1947) concept of patriarchy is useful here to explore how both girls and boys are constrained by various patriarchal structures such as patriarchal culture of preference for sons.

In Weber's conception of patriarchy, domination of younger men, who are yet to be household heads, is as important as male domination over women in household relations (Hartmann, 1979, 1981; Walby, 1989: 214). Weber's conception of patriarchy thus includes gender and generational dimensions of male dominance. An understanding and

analysis of a patriarchal system, such as in Bangladesh, from gender and generational dimensions is important to shed light on how patriarchal culture, which is embodied through various patriarchal practices, ultimately constrains girls as well as boys in participating in decisions on personal matters such as education, marriage, use of time, recreation, friendship, and social life.

Patriarchy gives rise to unequal gender identity that values sons over daughters in Bangladesh (Blanchet, 1996: 50-52; Khan, 2001: 22-24; Huda, 2006: 258). This practice is more prevalent in rural areas. The different value placed on girls and boys in turn creates differential opportunities for girls and boys to participate in personal decision-making.

For instance, all the girls from lower income families and some from middle class families in my study identified themselves as *jhamela/bojha* (liability/burden) against boys considered as *bongsher alo/batti/uttaradhikar* (lineage of family). Similarly, community members in my study drew on sex roles to suggest the importance of boys for the family. The value of sons and therefore preference for sons over daughters is expressed in the following statement by a female community member:

> If someone gives birth to a child and is asked about it, he would say, '*Allah* [God] has been very merciful to us'. This is when the baby is a boy. But, if the baby was a girl, then he would express his utter disappointment, 'no, my hope was not fulfilled'. This way, we create a clear demarcation between girls and boys right from their birth. Again, if a boy falls down then we say, 'oh! You are a boy, it is nothing, stand up'. (FGD, 04.01.2008)

The above statement points to the process through which cultural values of preference for sons are transmitted and a distinct gender identity is instilled among children from their early childhood. Accordingly, particular gender identity creates different opportunities and constraints for girls and boys in terms of their experiences of participation in personal decisions. As children learn to relate to their environment in specific ways depending on their specific gender roles, they are, in turn, entitled to differential access to household resources and power. In this way girls and boys internalise parental values and social norms and develop self-regulation (see for instance, Trommsdorff and Kornadt, 2003; Maccoby, 2007). Such internalisation through regulating children and young people's emotions encourages girls and boys to value harmony in familial relationships instead of pursuing personal goals and desires to express themselves.

The unequal property inheritance system is considered to be a major source of male dominance over women in Bangladesh and thereby son preference over daughters. Thus, gender discrimination due to unequal property inheritance is viewed as one of the causes of girls' and boys' differential opportunities to participate in personal decision-making. Three interrelated factors—an absence of an effective social security system, patrilocal marriage, and sons' greater share in parental property—make parents depend on their sons for their old-age security.

However, there are considerable debates among scholars in Bangladesh about whether this property inheritance system under Muslim law is discriminatory against girls and women (Chaudhury and Ahmed, 1980: 8; Khan, 2001: 98-99). In Bangladesh, parental reliance on sons for-old age security creates discriminatory practices in relation to girls' and boys' access to various rights and resources such as education and marriage. Some male community members in my research remarked upon this practice, which is reflected in the following statement of one Community Member:

> It is an issue of who has control over maximum resources... if girls were equally distributed with parental property, then we [parents] would not have to rely exclusively on our sons during our old-age. Our son-in-law would be interested in looking after us if daughters got equal share on parental property. In that case, daughters would be equally valued as we value our sons. (FGD, 07.09.2007)

Thus, gender roles guide parental goals in child socialisation in Bangladesh, which create different opportunities and constraints for girls and boys in exercising their choices in making personal decisions. Children in Bangladesh from early childhood are therefore socialised to take up gender roles: boys to look after their parents and maintain the family whereas girls are prepared for marriage. The views of adults and young people's experiences in my research suggest that both girls and boys are differently constrained by patriarchal structures in terms of their opportunities to participate in family-level decision-making. In the following section, I discuss how gender roles shape girls' and boys' opportunities to participate in personal decision-making.

'There is no return in investing in daughters'

> There is no return in investing in daughters. I get monthly 3000 Taka from my only son for my expenses but I do not get a single penny from my three earning but married daughters. This is the main reason parents in our patriarchal society tend not to invest in their daughters and thereby daughters have less voice over decisions. (Sofiqul, a father, FGD with Community Members, 07.09.2007)

Thus, the value placed on girls and boys affects children and young people's opportunities to participate in making personal decisions and the actual choices that children and young people make regarding education, marriage and social life. In order to prepare boys to provide old-age security to their parents, boys are expected to succeed in education, careers or other work and offer lifelong support to parents. Therefore, intergenerational relationships in Bangladesh are gendered. Parents across class and geographic location in my study were found to invest more in sons than in daughters, which shaped girls' and boys' opportunities to participate in personal decision-making differently. Daughters are considered a liability and a double loss as they require dowry payment and leave home after marriage. This gendered nature of intergenerational reciprocity constrains girls' and boys' opportunities to influence personal decision-making, as expressed in conversations with a 15 year old boy Lavlu and his mother:

> I do not expect anything from my son-in-law. But I strongly believe that if my son earns two Taka [Bangladeshi currency], of course, he will give me one Taka. This is my hope and he will never ignore me. Whatever I am doing now, that is, investing family resources exclusively in him [Lavlu] is considering my future [old-age security]. (Interview, 01.01.2008)

In a similar vein, Lavlu expressed his strong commitment to take responsibility for his parents. Lavlu stated that as soon as he passed the Secondary School Certificate examination, he intended to get admission into the local polytechnic college for a diploma course so he could quickly find a job to support his parents. Lavlu also hoped that, along with his diploma course, he would start offering educational private tuition so that he could support his family even before he completed his degree and got a job. Lavlu seemed quite empathetic about the sacrifice that his parents were making for him as he commented, 'I feel so strongly for my parents because of the sacrifice they are making for me by consuming minimum and offering me the maximum'. (Interview, 02.01.2008). When asked why she did not have the same expectation from her two daughters, one of whom was older than her son, Lavlu's mother replied, 'because I am not preparing them [daughters] in that way. Then, how can I expect from them? They will be married off and leave my house for ever' (Interview, 01.01.2008).

The above examples reveal one particular dimension of interdependent parent-child relations in Bangladesh, which is inter-reliance between parents and sons. It also points to the vulnerability of parents in their concern for old-age security in the absence of a welfare society. Therefore, intergenerational relations are not only shaped by present and

past experiences of parent-child interactions but also the expected development of parent-child relations in future (see also, Trommsdorff and Kornadt, 2003: 278-279). The gender dimension in parental reliance on sons for old-age security makes parents less interested in investing in daughters than in sons, which creates differing opportunities for girls and boys to participate in making decisions such as marriage, education, subject choices in school, recreation and social life. While boys were often able to pursue their education, girls' desires were often ignored, as exemplified in the following three examples in my study.

Mita (girl, 13 years), became a school dropout after graduating from Class Five. Mita expressed frustration that she had only reached Class Five and did not have any private tuition whereas her brother Lavlu received at least three sessions of daily private tuition throughout the year. In individual interviews, pointing to the discriminatory practices of their parents between daughters and the only son Lavlu, Mita and her elder sister (Mouri, now aged 18 and married) expressed their disappointment towards their parents: '*pola-ai shob* [the boy is everything] …they [parents] are doing everything for their son. They do not care about us since we are not going to feed them….' (Interview, 07.01.2008). When asked about Mita being a school dropout, her parents remarked, 'we had been too busy in looking after our son that we ignored our daughter. We could not provide her with necessary support so that she could continue her study' (Interview, 01.01.2008). Considering the family's economic situation and their parents' expectations that their son would look after them in old-age, neither Mouri nor Mita ever expressed their desire to get private tuition, their dissatisfaction over their parents' investment in their son or their qualms about their early marriages.

Similarly, Barsha (girl aged 14) was a child leader of the district Children's Council representing working children in Tangail. Barsha became a school dropout once she had graduated from Class Seven. When Barsha expressed her desire to continue studying, she was reprimanded by her father, 'do you want to be a barrier in your brother's life path'? Her father was no longer able to finance her educational expenses as he had to meet the monthly Taka 3000 (US$39) for her younger brother's private tuition. Barsha drew on traditional gender roles to explain her father's discriminatory practice, 'because my brother will be doing something for the family, which I will not be able to do so as I will be married off'(FGD, District Children's Council leaders, 6.01.2008).

The practice of son preference not only exists in less educated and poor families as exemplified above, but is also prevalent in educated, middle class families in the absence of social security systems. For instance, Misty's (girl, aged 15, Class Nine) father was eager to finance his son but not his daughter to study medicine at private college. When asked about the differential attitude towards daughter and son, Misty expressed her frustration, 'because, my brother will feed my parents in the future, and this is the way our society works' (FGD with BBG High School girls, 07.01.2008).

While parental expectations towards sons obviously privileges boys over girls, it nevertheless overburdens boys, which constrains them from freely expressing their views and pursuing personal goals. The experience of Lavlu (boy aged 15), discussed above, is similar to many other boys in my study, who experienced burdens and pressures due to parental expectations to prepare themselves to support their families. For example, none of the ten girl leaders of the Sub-district Children's Council attended in my research reported any parental pressures in relation to losing time and hampering studies due to their involvement with the Children's Council programs.

In contrast, the majority of the 27 boy leaders participated in my study narrated the way their parents, especially their fathers, complained about their involvement with the Children's Council due to loss of time. For instance, while Lavlu showed a commitment and obligation to support his family, he felt constrained in freely expressing his views or pursuing his own desires. For instance, compared to his two sisters who had been extensively involved in Children's Council activities, Lavlu was not involved at all despite his willingness. This was because he did not have any time to spare for his own recreation as his mother commented, 'Lavlu does not have a single moment to spare even for playing or spending time with a friend in the afternoons. He rarely plays with his friends for a short time at our courtyard' (Interview with Lavlu's mother, 17.01.2008). Lavlu initially joined the Children's Council but voluntarily dropped out as he had found it time consuming as he commented:

> In order to participate in decisions, you need to enter a system such as Child Council... I do not have time to do that... Even I do not have time for socialisation and recreation with other boys except on a rare occasion such as going to a musical concert once in a while. (Interview, 02.01.2008)

Thus, like many other boys in my research Lavlu appeared to be very careful to utilise his precious time only in activities his parents approved, such as attending private educational

coaching that would help him achieve parental expectations as his mother commented: 'as soon as Lavlu stands on his own feet, we will see better days' (Interview, 08.01.2008). Here the phrase standing on one's feet suggests economic solvency while at the same time retaining emotional and material interdependency in familial relationships. In this context, children's economic independence does not lead to autonomy or emotional and material independence in Bangladesh in the way that is observed in the Majority World (see also, Ding and Littleton, 2005:42).

Like other boys who participated in my research Lavlu shared his parents' dreams despite his interests in joining the Children's Council, or spending time with friends or in playing. Lavlu thus consciously made active choices and decided to limit expressing his desires as he considered that, 'It will kill my time and my future if I join the Child Council. It will hurt my parents that I am not listening to them. They do not have anyone [to look after themselves] except me' (Interview, 02.01.2008).

In this way, in the absence of a welfare system patriarchal convention also disadvantages boys as they experience pressure and a great sense of obligation to support their parents and fulfil filial obligation which constrains their opportunities to pursue personal desires (see also, Morrow, 2013b: 266). Also, in families where there is more than one son, the eldest son is expected to take parental responsibility; thereby he is under more pressure and parental control than the younger son. Thus, gender interplays with generation and birth order and places constraints for girls' and boys' opportunities to participate in their personal decision-making differently.

The young people in my study reported that their interdependency in familial relationships in the present also made them less expressive in pursuing personal desires and valuing more of familial interdependency and mutuality. For instance, girls and boys in my research often commented that 'they [parents] feed us and clothed us. So, we must listen to them'. Some young people also reported that their families relied on their labour for household maintenance in the present. These young people also feel obliged to support their families by working at family farms or elsewhere and thereby choose not to resist parents' demands or follow personal desires such as attending the Children's Council programs or pursuing education.

The above examples point to processes of socialisation that have profound implications for children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making, which affect girls and boys differently. Instead of parents negotiating with children's wishes, children and young people conform to the wishes and desires of their parents within social structures predominantly based on generation, gender and also birth order. Children and young people internalise parental goals and social norms of reciprocity in intergenerational relations, and regulate their behaviour and control their emotions in expressing their desires.

Thus, children and young people obey social rules, norms and values imprinted by their parents and society. In this way, children and young people continually make conscious and active choices in constrained circumstances about not expressing their personal desires. These findings contradict Western experiences where negotiation is considered as the educational norm. In the West parenting practices generally allow negotiation with children's wishes, favouring children's autonomy and consultation with them in making decisions (for instance, Vandenbroeck and Bie, 2006:136).

Like education, marriage is another major area of decision-making where girls, predominantly those from less socioeconomic ally well-off groups, experience a lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making due to dowry-related costs in marriage. This issue is discussed in the following section.

'The tyranny of dowry' for children and young people's participation

The practice of paying a dowry and the inflation of dowry demand are considered one of the main reasons for widespread early marriage for girls in Bangladesh. As a result, girls have few opportunities to participate in decision-making in areas such as education and marriage. Dowry refers to money, ornaments and luxury items given by a bride's family to her bridegroom and or his family. Dowry-related domestic violence against women and girls such as torture, acid attacks, murder and suicide are very high in Bangladesh. For instance, 85 percent of women are reported to experience various dowry-related violence (Chowdhury, 2004: 249). Although dowry payment is illegal in Bangladesh, it is widely practiced and demanded by grooms and or their families. Dowry payment has become an 'essential component' of marriage especially in rural Bangladesh (Huda, 2006:249; Chowdhury, 2010:1).

There is a distinction between dowry and dower. Dower (*mehr*) is a form of marriage payment under Muslim law that the groom should pay to the bride as bride price or bride wealth, a form of security for the bride, during marriage. However, a profound shift from dower to dowry, increased dowry payment, and its negative impact on women and girls' further subordination and vulnerability has been observed in Bangladesh as well as in India and Pakistan (White, 1992; Huda, 2006; Ambrus et al., 2008; Heissler, 2009; Chowdhury, 2010; Feldman, 2010). For instance, Heissler's (2009) study in Tangail villages showed that girls from poorer households migrate for work to accumulate dowry payments for marriage and there are negative consequences of their choices of migration for work.

All of the 16 parents in my study who married their daughters off early, mentioned that the dowry was the prime reason for their daughters' early marriage and without consulting them. In Bangladesh, 74 percent of girls, against less than one percent of boys, get married before they reach 18. Of them, one third of the girls get married before they reach 15 (Amin et al., 2006; UNICEF, 2010b), and 48 percent of girls get married between 15 and 19 years (Reinbold, 2014: 36). Community participants in my study reported that in order to avoid increased dowry payment, poorer parents opt for child marriage. For instance, one mother commented, '…if I wait until she is 18, who is going to marry that old girl and who is going to pay a huge amount of dowry during that time'? (Interview, 15.11.2007).

Thus, there is a positive correlation between younger brides and smaller dowry payments. In addition, the demand for young female sexuality, which is also related to maintaining sexual purity of girls, contributes to girls' early marriage and their lack of opportunities to participate in marriage decisions in Bangladesh and in India (Chowdhury, 2004; Huda, 2006; UNICEF, 2008). In a study on child domestics in Bangladesh, Jensen (2014) remarks on the demand for a docile mind and body that can be easily controlled.

A similar argument can be made regarding the demand for young female sexuality and sexual purity of girls and the resultant early marriage. Another reason for early marriage includes reducing family pressure through expenditure on girls. Many girls in my study, especially from limited educational and less socioeconomically well-off backgrounds, considered that parental decisions were in their best interests and therefore they did not wish to object or have an opinion in decisions about marriage.

For instance, one girl, Mita (aged 13) who was a peer educator of the Children's Council, was aware of the disadvantages of early marriage as she had training in child rights and reproductive health issues. Mita also performed popular drama aimed against child marriage in villages to raise public awareness about the negative consequences of early marriages. Yet, considering the economic situation of her parents, Mita conformed to her parents' wish for her early marriage. Mita expressed her concern that her parents were already over-burdened with borrowing 100,000 Taka (US$1,293) for a dowry payment for her elder sister. They borrowed this money from four different NGOs in the name of initiating income generating activities. Mita did not want to cause further pain for her parents because she feared that:

> The amount of dowry demand will be increased with my increased age. I am happy to accept my marriage decision now made by my parents. I do not want to increase any more burdens on my parents. Whatever parents decide is for our good. (Interview, 20.01.2008)

In contrast to the views expressed above, girls from urban, educated and middle class families commented that they were 100 percent confident that their parents would consult them in marriage and child marriage was not an issue for them at all (FGD, BBG High School girls, 07.01.2008). In this regard, class, gender, education, parental education and occupational status, and geographic location are factors in girls' opportunities to participate in education and marriage decisions. Accordingly, the educated middle class girls from the two best schools in Tangail did not consider that early marriage or payment of a dowry or dropping out from school was an issue for them. For these girls an opportunity for higher education and the possibility of their subsequent economic independence would reduce dowry pressure.

In line with the experiences of most rural girls, some older boys in my study reported that boys in rural areas were sometimes pressured by their family into early marriage. Similarly, drawing on examples from rural Bangladesh, Del Franco (2010:121) shows how boys lack opportunities to influence decisions regarding education and their early marriage.

As my data show, two factors, namely getting a dowry to set up a small business and family desire to maintain lineage, contribute to the incidence of boys' early marriage in rural areas in Bangladesh. In such circumstances boys hardly have any opportunities to participate in marriage decisions. For instance, Raju (boy, aged 15) a leader of the

Children's Council narrated a story of his friend Jubair (aged 15), who recently got married and became a school dropout. When Jubair refused to get married so early, his father gave him an ultimatum:

> 'How dare you! The bride's father has already sold his land to accumulate dowry payment for this marriage and you are now saying that you do not want to get married…if you refuse to get married, you will see your parents' dead faces tomorrow…' (FGD, District Children Councils leaders, 07.10.2007)

Apart from the dowry issue, family expectation to maintain lineage also contributed to constraining some boys' participation in marriage decisions. Sometimes older boys, especially in rural areas, were pressured by family elders to get married early. For instance, Mohidul (boy, aged 16) expressed his frustration that when his father had died two years ago, his grandmother insisted he get married so that she could see her great grandson before she died. Being a leader of the Children's Council, Mohidul refused to get married:

> How can I get married at 14 when I myself am a child leader, and an advocate against child marriage? So, I requested one of my school teachers who was kind enough to approach and he agreed to talk to my family so that they did not pressurise me to get married now. My teacher visited our house and talked to the elders. Eventually, I was able to escape from being married early. (FGD with District Children's Council leaders, 05.01.2008)

The above example suggests that Mohidul was able to engage in 'proxy agency' (see also, Bandura, 2001; Kuczynski and Parkin, 2007) to influence his marriage decision. The example further reveals that resistance and negotiation differ according to genders. As compared to the boys above, none of the girl participants in my study resisted over issues involving marriage. Girls' tendency to non-resistance or to greatly conform to parents' expectations was shaped by internalisation of parental goals and social norms of intergenerational interdependency especially between sons and parents.

Thus, gender, class, geographic location, social networks and particular social skills such as interpersonal relations, effective communication and negotiation interplay with generation and social values of reciprocity in creating differential opportunities and constraints for girls and boys in shaping their experiences of participation in personal decisions such as marriage and education.

Taking together parental roles as protectors and providers and parental goals of developing relational identity in interdependent familial relationships, in the following

section I discuss how violence as a socialisation and control mechanism shapes children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making.

Violence as a socialisation and control mechanism

The use of violence to socialise and educate children and young people is another contributing factor to poor child-adult social relations in Bangladesh which constrain children and young people's agency and limits their participation in making decisions. An understanding and analysis of the style and practice of parenting and education used to socialise children and young people at home and in educational institutions is necessary in understanding challenges for children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

Violence in the forms of controlling, emotional and physical punishment as a mechanism to *manush kora* (bringing up) children and young people in Bangladeshi society has been well documented (for instance, Blanchet, 1996; Kabeer, 2001; Conticini and Hulme, 2007; UNICEF, 2009b). Raising children and young people in Bangladesh usually involves a combination of physical punishment, threat and force (Conticini and Hulme, 2007). Use of violence as a means to socialise and educate children and young people is therefore widely accepted in Bangladeshi society, though this varies across class, gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, geography, parental education and occupation status including other differences. Studies show that physical or corporal punishment as a socialisation and discipline strategy is commonly used in many societies, both in developed and especially developing countries across the world (see for instance, Frankenberg et al., 2010: 455).

The impact of violence on children and young people's constrained opportunities to participate in decision-making in their personal lives is widely stated by young people in my study. The young people reported that they all experienced controlling, emotional or physical punishment to a greater or lesser extent at home, in educational institutions and sometimes at work places. The impact of such violence on young people's constrained agency to express themselves is evident in the following statement of a Children's Council leader shared by experiences of many other young people:

> It [violence] makes us lack self-esteem, confidence, courage and motivation to express ourselves. It also led us to feelings of shame, guilt, shyness, frustration, disappointment,

depression and sometimes rebelliousness. (FGD, Sub-district Children's Council leaders, 12.01.2008)

In this section I have discussed intergenerational contracts which create interdependence in parent-child relations. Such interdependency is premised on children's obligations and reciprocity to support their families and which are reflected in parent-child interactions. The interdependency between parents and children has two major dimensions. The first is children's economic dependency on parents. The second is parents' need for children's labour or economic support from young children as well as security for aged parents when children are adults.

In the absence of a welfare society, I have shown that patriarchy creates a particular context for differential access and opportunity for girls' and boys' participation in decision-making about personal matters such as marriage, education and social life. The value of support provided by boys to their parents, either currently or in their old-age, and the cost of girls' dowry on marriage, are two significant issues that shape the extent to which boys and girls can negotiate their positions within broader patriarchal social structures.

I have also demonstrated that girls and boys experience tensions and challenges posed by the neoliberal educational policy agenda of compulsory school attendance and result-oriented futuristic school performance. In line with findings of other researchers in a similar context such as in Andhra Pradesh, India (Morrow, 2013b: 258-259) my findings suggest that girls' and boys' opportunities for participation in personal decision-making are constrained by the individualisation processes of the neoliberal policy agenda and young people's efforts to value care networks and family interdependencies. Finally, I have shown that particular child socialisation strategies based on controlling, emotional and physical violence contributed to children and young people's constrained agency to participate in personal decision-making.

This analysis offers some implications for children and young people's participation in decision-making. First, reciprocity and interdependency are the core values that shape parental goals for child socialisation and govern parent-child interactions and relations in Bangladesh.

Second, in the absence of state welfare protection parental roles as providers and protectors enable parents to draw on their resource and positional power to exert authority over children, which is embodied through violence-based socialisation practices especially among less socioeconomically well-off families. Exercise of parental power is underpinned by distinct gender roles that create different opportunities and constraints for girls and boys in shaping their experiences of participation in decision-making.

Third, parent-child interactions at household level are greatly influenced by broader structural issues such as gender and poverty, cultural values of reciprocity and filial piety, and social policies which demand greater attention for analysis to address children and young people's participation in making personal decisions.

Conclusions

My findings show that familial relationships are central to children and young people's lives. The dynamics of these relationships shape not only how but also whether children and young people can participate in family-level decision-making. As such, household relations are best understood as interdependent both in emotional and material senses. Parental roles as protectors and providers shape socialisation processes that use violence as socialisation strategies and thereby impact on children and young people's developmental outcomes.

I have argued that first, children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making at family-level is greatly shaped by parental concerns about protecting children and young people's interests, including protection from harm and abuse in the socio-political context of a dangerous society. Second, in the absence of a welfare society, parent-child relations are also tied up with intergenerational contracts for future as well as present security that construct particular parent-child interactions. Instead of pursuing personal goals children and young people develop relational identity to conform to solidarity and harmony in household relations which shapes girls' and boys' experiences of participation in decision-making differently.

This way, children and young people engage in processes of morality by 'internalising' (Grusec and Goodnow, 1994) parental goals through understanding and acceptance of values and norms and by regulating their emotions (see also, Trommsdorff and Kornadt, 2003: 292). I have argued that social norms and values of reciprocity and

interdependencies in familial relationships intersect with both micro and macro structural factors in shaping children and young people's opportunities to participate in family-level decision-making.

The above findings suggest some implications for children and young people's participation in family-level decision-making. For instance, relationships and therefore contexts are crucial in understanding how familial relationships are imbued with adult benevolent power over children and young people. The dynamics of children and young people's familial interactions across different socioeconomic classes suggest that children and young people's opportunities and choices cannot be isolated from children and young people's interdependent relationships with their families. This understanding is crucial because of the culture-specific meaning of parenting and caring and parent-child relations which create a particular context in which children and young people are embedded.

My findings therefore raise questions about the prevailing assumptions and approaches to children and young people's participation in decision-making. They question the individualised approach to children and young people's rights, opportunities and choices in decision-making processes. Thus, I underscore the significance of understanding the power of various structuring principles, institutions, ideas and values on child socialisation, the roles of children and young people's own reasoning and the country's governance systems and social policies on children and young people's lives in general and their opportunities and choices of participation in decision-making in particular.

Like inter-personal relationships at the family-level, investigating children and young people's relationships within society is equally important to understand individual and social processes that constrain children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making in both private and public spaces.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the importance of understanding social relations and the constraints of social structures and institutions on children and young people in their opportunities to participate, and the actual choices they make in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh.

Chapter 7 Power and relational dynamics: children and young people's participation within relational contexts in society

> [T]he proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another.
>
> (Goffman, 1967: 2)

Introduction

In this chapter I investigate children and young people's relationships with society by exploring sociocultural processes that play critical roles in children and young people's marginalisation within various intergenerational and intra-generational relationships. I demonstrate how the structure of networks, conventions and resources that constitute social worlds (Becker, 1982) generate a range of opportunities and challenges for children and young people's participation in personal and collective decision-making. Analysing children and young people's relationships with society is thus critical in understanding the power and relational dimensions of children and young people's social interactions that shape their experiences of participation in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh.

In doing so, I draw on the concepts of generation (Alanen, 2001; Mayall, 2002; Mayall and Zeiher, 2003; Alanen, 2009), social worlds (Becker, 1982; Crossley, 2011), social exchange (Emerson, 1962; Homans, 1974; Thibaut and Kelly, 2007), and the ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1995), and argue that four main factors contribute to children and young people's constrained agency and limited opportunities to participate in decision-making.

First, children and young people are embedded in interdependent social relations. Second, children and young people's interactions and social relations are characterised by interrelated and overlapping dimensions such as symbolic, affective, convention, strategic and exchange–power (Crossley, 2011). Third, relations and networks generate social behaviour that is premised upon values and norms of duty, trust, obedience, deference, conformity and empathy. Finally, the fundamental axis of social power not

only emanates from age but is also organised politically, economically, around sex and gender, around ethnicity, caste, class, social location, children and young people's birth identity, sexuality and around the control over resources. I conclude by underscoring the importance of a broad analysis of relations and structures of power and the ways these relations and power impact on the everyday and institutional practices that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in private and public spaces.

In the following section, I introduce the concepts of generation (Alanen, 2001, 2009), social worlds (Crossley, 2011), social exchange (Emerson, 1962; Homans, 1974; Thibaut and Kelly, 2007) and ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1995) that I have drawn on in analysing my data in this chapter.

First, I draw on the concept of generation to understand the construction of childhood and adulthood and the inter-relations between them in regards to children and young people's participation in decisions. Alanen (2001: 12; 2009) defines the concept of generation as a system of relationships among social positions and to a relation of power. According to this conceptualisation, the generational structures or order means interactive social or relational practices or processes of social construction of childhood and adulthood. Generational relations therefore refer to the relationships between individuals located in different life stages (intergenerational relations) or between individuals sharing the same life stage (intra-generational relations) (Alanen, 2001; 2009: 160; Olk, 2009: 189, 199).

Thus, the concept of generation has two axes. One axis deals with the relationship between older and younger groups and thereby concerns generational relationships. Along the other axis is the relationship that members of a generation have with each other and which constitutes generational membership (Honing, 2009: 70). Such relationship between social groups and positions can take place at four different levels: individual relations, group relations at the local level, cohort effects at individual level, and cohort effects at group levels (Mayall, 2001: 2-3 ; 2002: 28-29).

Drawing on this concept of generational relations, this chapter examines children and young people's intergenerational and intra-generational relationships in four institutional settings, namely, home, school, community/work place and state. An understanding of these various levels of generational relationships is useful in understanding the role of

children and young people's different positions within network relationships and the sources of power that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in various institutional settings.

Second, drawing on Becker (1982), Crossley (2011: 22) conceptualises the idea of social worlds as networks of interaction and relations. Thus, relations are embedded in networks of relations and this affects individuals who are embedded in these networks relations. According to Becker (1982), social worlds are constituted through three crucial components: networks, conventions and resources. Networks are constituted through interactions and relations. Such interactions and relations draw upon specific conventions and involve the exchange of resources that are usually distributed unequally across members of the networks.

Therefore, analyses of children and young people's relations with society can help identify mechanisms within interactions, relations and networks which reveal children and young people's exchange relations with social worlds. Such an understanding of children and young people's exchange relations points to the way children and young people's intersubjectivity is constructed and embodied in everyday and institutional practices that shape their experiences of participation in decision-making in various institutional contexts.

Third, according to a different theory namely social exchange theory, people are interdependent not only for material goods but also for non-material needs. From this point of view interaction can be considered as an exchange of economic as well as multi-faceted non-economic goods that weave social relations (Emerson, 1962; Homans, 1974; Thibaut and Kelly, 2007). Therefore, interaction organises and transfers goods and resources between actors and thus creates interdependency between individuals in relations. Crossley (2011: 105) argues that such interdependency is a source of power in social relations.

Thus, the lens of social exchange can help us explain and understand children and young people's different positions within various network relations, socialisation and the basis of social power that influence children and young people's opportunities to influence decision-making. This understanding necessitates us looking at the role of socialisation

in acquisition of values and attitudes such as obedience, conformity and deference to adult control and authority in guiding children and young people's behaviour.

Finally, drawing on the concept of ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I argue that socialisation interactions in various relational settings and situations greatly affect children and young people's acquisition of values, attitudes, motives and attributes, self-esteem, self-regulation of behaviour, morals, and gender roles that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 1995), ecological contexts and interactions influence the process of socialisation. Ecology involves interrelationships between humans and their environments that include psychological, social, and cultural processes over time (Berns, 2013: 20). Therefore, it is the social context of individual interactions and experiences that determines the extent to which children and young people can develop their abilities and have opportunities to participate in decision-making.

Drawing on the above concepts, this chapter is structured in three sections. In the first section, I explore various socialisation processes and practices of children and young people in Bangladesh. I delineate the construction of children and people's intersubjectivity through a process of socialisation to make children and young people interdependent in social relations. In this process, I identify the age hierarchy in the social structure of Tangail that contributes to poor child-adult social relations. I argue that child-adult relations are impacted by the country's socialisation and education styles and practices. I have found that two aspects of socialisation practices govern child-adult relations in Bangladesh. They are first, social norms and values of obedience, conformity and deference to adult control and authority, and second, the use of physical and emotional violence as a form of socialisation and control which I discussed in Chapter Six.

In order to explore how socialisation practices in Tangail impact on children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making, in the second section I draw on a structural and sociocultural analysis of generational relations (Alanen, 2009) and social exchange (Becker, 1982; Crossley, 2011). Through the lens of generational relations and social exchange, I investigate child-adult relationships in four social positions, namely, parent-child, teacher-student, employer-child worker, and service providers and policy

planners-child. Extending the generational and social exchange analyses in the third section of the chapter I explore the relationships between children and young people themselves. Thus, intergenerational and intra-generational relationships are examined in different child-adult and child-child social positions within various social relations.

The following sections demonstrate how social institutions, norms and traditions of age-hierarchy in Bangladeshi society result in interdependent and poor child-adult social relations which constrain children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in private and public decision-making.

Age-based social hierarchy and poor child-adult social relations

Relationships are vital contexts for children and young people's participation in decision-making. Child-adult relationships are one such vital context or space that create or do not create opportunities for children and young people's participation in decision-making. In regards to decision-making, children and young people's ability is the result of interplay between children and young people's competences and social opportunities available to them (Stoecklin, 2012: 12). Therefore, children and young people's participation in decision-making has been increasingly viewed as a relational dimension in generational relationships (Mannion, 2007: 405; Aasen et al., 2009: 5; Bjerke, 2011b: 93; Jamieson and Milne, 2012: 265; Mayall, 2012: 349; Stoecklin, 2012: 12; Tisdall and Punch, 2012: 255; Wyness, 2012; Moss, 2013: 25).

One theme that consistently emerges from the data in my study was that generally adults were not perceived to be friendly towards children and young people, making them feel inferior and fearful of speaking to adults. Children and young people identified this fear of elders as one of the major obstacles to freely expressing their views in decision-making. The following comment made by a young participant succinctly captures the views of many other young people in my study:

> The relationship between children and *poriber* [6] members and other adults in the society is very important to us. If adults are not friendly with us, always try to maintain a distance and never call us in an adoring way, then how can we freely talk to them? If you want children

[6] *Poriber* means family. Here *poriber* refers to public care institution. Orphan children living in public care institutions refer to their care institution as their family.

> to talk about their issues, you need to be their friend. (Boy, aged 14 in public institutional care home, 10.02.2008)

The majority of the young people involved in this study, and some adults, particularly those involved in the development sector, felt that such an extreme form of fear of adults stemmed from children and young people's low social position compared to that of adults. In response to the question of 'what constrains children's participation', different types of participants, especially young people, stated including: *poribesh-er obhab* (lack of environment), *poriber o shomaje upjukto poribesh-er obhab* (lack of congenial atmosphere within family and society), and *shishuder jonno upojogi poribeshe-er obhab* (lack of a child-friendly environment). Unpacking the notion of a 'lack of environment' revealed that poor child-adult social relations were one of the constraining factors in children and young people's participation in decision-making in various social relationships.

In the following sections, I first discuss how children and young people's economic, social and political dependency on adults accords children and young people with subordinate social status, which contributes to poor child-adult social relations. Secondly, I demonstrate how socialisation goals aimed at obedience, deference and conformity to adults contribute to poor child-adult social relations in Tangail. Such poor child-adult social relations are considered as one of the major constraining factors for children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

Dependence, interdependence and subordinated status

Children and young people's economic, social and political dependency on adults subjects children and young people under adult authority and control and thereby subordinate social status. Children and young people's subordinated social status contributes to poor child-adult social relations, which underestimates children and young people as independent or autonomous agents (James, 2009; Mayall, 2012: 349). The majority of the young people in my study and community adults stated that children and young people's various forms of material and non-material dependency in child-adult social positions is one of the major factors for children and young people's constrained opportunities to participate in decision-making. One young participant commented (boy, aged 16 years and a leader of the Children's Council), 'parents feed us, clothed us, so we must listen to them'. This view was shared by most of the young people in my study.

Similarly, one parent (father) remarked, 'we feed them [children and young people]; they are bound to listen to us', which reflects attitudes towards children and young people of many adults, especially in less socioeconomic ally well-off backgrounds.

In regards to children and young people's participation in decision-making, the young people cited the following metaphor which was often used by adults as an example of children and young people's dependence on adults, 'did I give birth to you or you gave birth to me?' The metaphor also reveals the expectation of unquestioning obedience of children and young people to adults.

Drawing on the issue of generation-based dependence, the above metaphor is often targeted to belittle children and young people's status as capable participants. Such attitude of adults towards children and young people to maintain age-based social hierarchy restricts the creation of child-adult relations based on mutual respect, friendliness and equity that young people in my study valued to enable them to freely express themselves in order to participate in decision-making. Among the surveyed adults, mainly the INGO and CBO staff who had been made aware of child rights and participation issues similarly identified the lack of status in child-adult relations being a significant factor for children and young people's constrained agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making. Thus, children and young people's lack of power to influence decision-making stems from children and young people's dependent relations within various child-adult social positions.

Children and young people's dependence on adults thus makes children and young people vulnerable to adult authority and power. The relationship between generational dependence and a lack of friendly child-adult relations needs to be understood in relation to children and young people's vulnerability to adult power, which may restrict children and young people's opportunity to participate in decision-making. In Bangladesh, as in many countries in the Global South, children and young people are vulnerable to adults' power in the absence of social infrastructure.

For instance, in the face of physical or emotional abuse by adults in authority such as parents, teachers, carers and employers, children and young people in Bangladesh are generally not protected by the state. Even though in 2010, the Bangladesh government issued a ban on physical punishment in educational institutions, this order is not

implemented. Thus, guardians exercise exclusive rights and responsibilities over children and young people making them vulnerable to power abuse which limits children and young people's opportunities to participate in decisions.

Children and young people's dependency on adults as well as intergenerational interdependence in familial relationships contribute to particular socialisation aimed at making children and young people obedient, conforming and deferent to adult control and authority. Such socialisation goals significantly constrain children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices they make regarding their participation, as discussed in the following section.

Obedience, deference and conformity as socialisation goals

Socialisation practices aimed at obedience, deference and conformity to adult control and authority result in poor intergenerational interactions which constrain children and young people's abilities and opportunities to participate in decision-making in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. In this regard, a domain-specific approach to socialisation processes suggest that interactions between children and adults in various social positions mediate in acquiring different socio-emotional skills and tendencies (Grusec and Davidov, 2010: 687).

The domains are different forms of social relationships or social interactions between children, young people and adults which involve different rules and mechanisms for effective behaviour change as well as to facilitate different outcomes. Five domains of socialisation featured in child-adult relations are protection, reciprocity, control, guided learning, and group participation (Grusec and Davidov, 2010: 693-703). Cross-cultural studies show that socialisation practices focus on fostering specific forms of self-regulation to maintain the cultural goal of harmony (Trommsdorff, 2012: 21).

The above insight suggests that the dominant form of generation-based socialisation in Bangladesh teaches children and young people to be respectful towards adults by listening obediently and not questioning or disagreeing with adults. This age-based socialisation process is further intersected by gender, class, ethnicity, caste, parents' education and employment status, geographic location and other social differences. As in many other countries of the Global South, this age-based hierarchy as a system of relationships is one

of many processes of socialisation structuring child-adult relationships and thereby regulating children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, the system and structure of age-based social hierarchy generates a type of child-adult social relationship characterised by extreme forms of respect, obedience and conformity to adult authority. Cross-cultural studies have found that cultural values and beliefs, such as age-based respect and obedience, structure children and young people's position in society, which can constrain their participation in decision-making (Bessell, 2009a: 306; Twum-Danso, 2009).

Similarly, in Bangladesh, age-based social hierarchy is a fundamental feature of organising intergenerational relationships. The role of children and young people in hierarchical child-adult relationships positions children and young people as subordinate to adults, which enforces their role as listeners not as contributors, even in decisions affecting their lives. The norms and traditions of the family and society expect unquestioning obedience from children and young people to adults. Children and young people in Bangladesh are thus socialised to deference to adults and not to speak up, question or disagree with adults from their early childhood.

An example of this age-based social hierarchy can be found in many statements of my research participants. For example, a boy (aged 15) touched upon this issue when he recalled the instructions of the religious teacher when he was 12 years old that:

> Children should not be discourteous to their elders and should obey whatever elders say. Children should never tell a lie and should always respect their teachers. Whenever children met teachers on the way, children should salute their teachers. (Shohag, FGD with District Children's Council leaders, 13.12.2007)

This sentiment of age hierarchy was also expressed by a group of Mandy ethnic minority girl (aged 12) when working on a worksheet exercise:

> Religion teaches us morality, and morality tells us to respect elders, to obey them. We grew up with this lesson right from our childhood, that whatever adults say is right. It is discourteous to give opinions to them; it is disobedience to disagree with their decisions. That is why we do not say anything about their decisions, whether the decisions are for ourselves or for any other matters. (FGD with Mandy ethnic minority girls and boys aged 12–14, 13.09.2007)

This strong sense of seniority-based respect and obedience was shared by almost all of the young people in my study. Similar attitudes were expressed by many adults as exemplified in the statement by one of the adult participants:

> We never saw our grandfathers asking for our fathers' or grandmothers' opinions. We never saw our fathers asking for our mothers' opinions or ours when we were children. We grew up with these values that whatever adults do is best for children and it has become one of our society's traditions. So, we do not feel like asking our children when we make decisions concerning them. (FGD, Community Resource Persons, 08.01.2008)

The young people in this study, especially the late adolescents and the leaders of the Children's Council, expressed their frustration that children and young people's assertiveness sometimes made them *beyadop* (discourteous) to adults, a term that is usually used or associated with child-adult interactions and relations. Regarding children and young people's participation in decision-making, the young people drew on some of the metaphors that they often encountered when adults saw them as being discourteous: 'You are only a devotee of two days and already you have changed the name of rice'; 'A branch is stronger than a tree'; 'Your hair has not grown yet but you are behaving smart'.

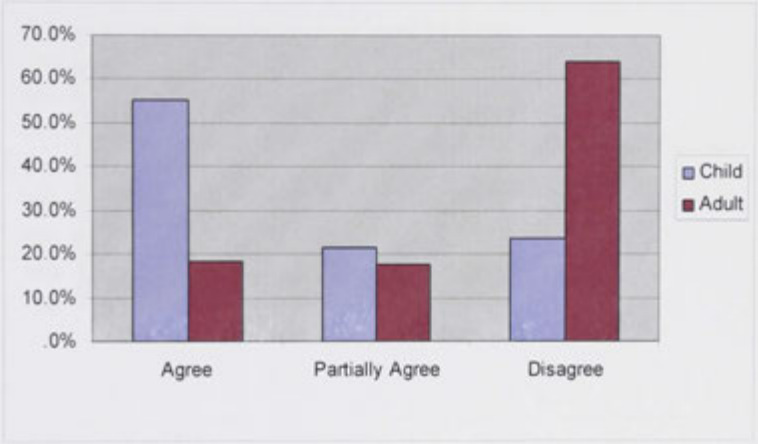
Thus, participation is difficult for children and young people from the perspective of children, young people and adults as remarked upon by the participants in the attitude survey findings. For instance, the majority of the young people and adults surveyed either agreed or partially agreed with the view that children and young people's participation is difficult in adult decision-making. There are no significant differences of experience between different age groups (12 to 13 years agreed 57 percent compared to 60 percent by 14 to 17 years) and by sex (61 percent girls against 60 percent boys).

However, there are differences of opinion between young people who are members of the Children's Council and those who are not. For instance, a majority (67 percent) of the Children's Council members believed that participation is problematic for children and young people compared to 59 percent of the non-member young people. One possible explanation for this difference of opinion could be that Children's Council members may attempt to participate and thereby encounter more resistance than non-members.

Adult resistance towards children and young people's participation can be explained in the way adults view children and young people's agency. Due to clashes with the cultural values of age-based respect, children and young people's participation in decision-

making may be mis-interpreted by adults as being discourteous or disobedient. Children and young people's participation can be seen as a direct assault on adult authority. The expectation of maintaining age-based seniority, respect and authority is reflected in the survey findings where more than half of the surveyed young people (54 percent) against less than a quarter of the adults (18 percent) stated that children and young people's participation in decision-making can be considered as discourteous to adults (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Children and young people's participation in decision-making can be perceived as discourteous by adults (adult=253, child-354; N=607)



This wide difference in attitude to participation between young people and adults points to a major gap between adult understanding of what constrains children and young people's participation and young people's understanding and experiences of the same issue. While more than half of the adults recognised that children and young people's participation was difficult in adult decision-making, less than a quarter acknowledged that there was any relationship between children and young people's participation and the adult attitude towards children and young people's disrespectfulness. This finding is highly inconsistent with the young people's views, where more than half of the young people not only viewed participation as problematic but also as being interpreted by adults as discourteous as one of the barriers to their participation in decision-making.

The difference in opinion between young people and adults suggests that adults seem to take for granted the expectation that hierarchical intergenerational relationships result in children and young people fearing and deferring to adults. The result also suggests that

adults may underestimate the quality of child-adult social relations that can significantly constrain children and young people's abilities and opportunities to express themselves.

In addition to the difference between the views of adults and young people, differences in attitude over participation in decision-making being seen as discourteous are also found among the young people themselves (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Children and young people's participation in decision-making can be perceived as discourteous by adults (members=203, non-members=151, N=354)

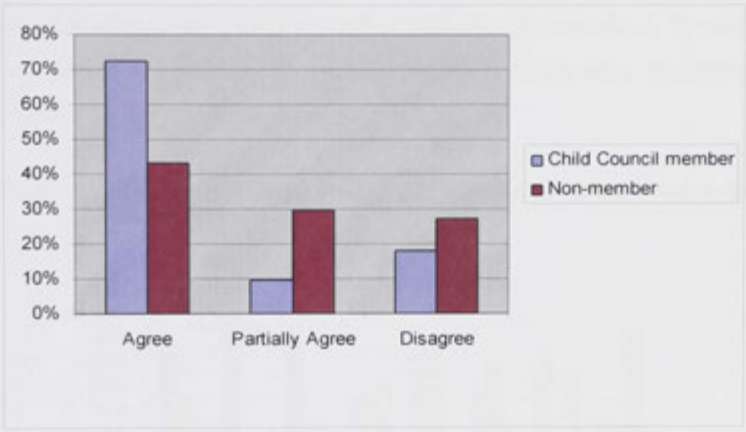


Figure 2 shows that young people's opinions over whether participation is a discourtesy also varied based on their membership status with the Children's Council. The survey data show that a majority of the Children's Council members (72 percent) agreed with this statement compared to only 43 percent of young people who were non-members of the Children's Council, though 30 percent of non-member young people partially agreed with that statement. The differences of opinion between the young people surveyed based on their membership status with the Children's Council can be examined by drawing on young people's experiences of participation in decision-making as revealed in other methods.

The members of the Children's Council, especially the leaders, were more articulate and assertive than many of the non-members due to increased opportunities and enhanced social skills developed through the Children's Council programs. The Children's Council leaders, in particular, were greatly involved in expressing their opinions and in participating in forums at community, local, national and occasionally regional and

international levels. These increased opportunities exposed the Children's Council members to greater resistance from adults, which may explain their agreement with the survey statement concerning children and young people's participation being seen as discourteous by adults.

These differences of opinions between the young people themselves were also present between different groups of young people depending on their social locations: working, ethnic minorities, educated and middle class families studying at the best schools, semi-literate and illiterate middle to less socioeconomically well-off families studying at religious educational institutions called *madrasha*, orphans living in public residential care homes and children of sex workers living in a private residential care home (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Children and young people's participation can be perceived as discourteous by adults (N=234)

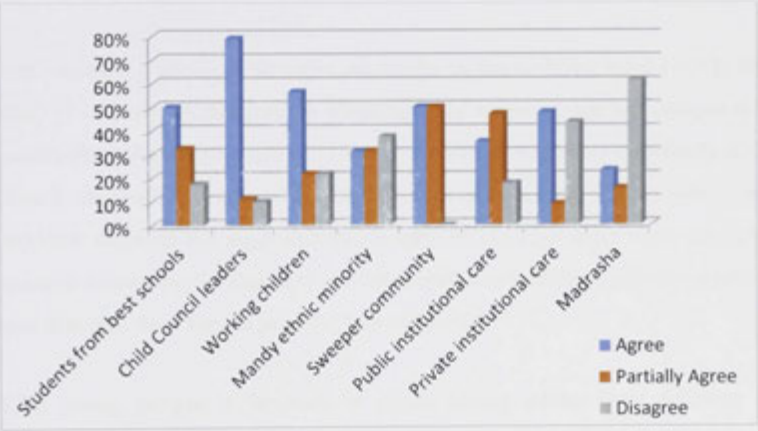


Figure 3 presents an overview of different groups of young people's perceptions about whether or not their participation is perceived as discourteous by adults. As can be seen, the Children's Council leaders tended to be more likely to identify a relationship between participation and discourteousness than any other groups of young people. The opinions of the working young people slightly exceeded opinions of young people from the best schools, the sweeper community and the private institutional care home, suggesting that the working young people appear to have faced the greatest resistance among this group of young people. However, young people from *madrasha* tended to agree less than other young people—more than three times less than the Children's Council leaders.

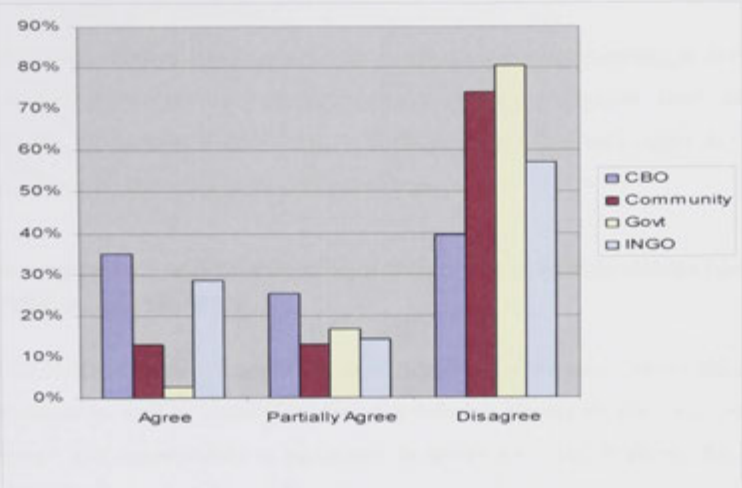
Compared to seven other groups of young people, the *madrasha* students overwhelmingly disagreed with the statement (62 percent) that children and young people's participation in decision-making can be considered as discourteous by adults. This reverse trend in opinions of the *madrasha* students could be due to the *madrasha* students both having greater opportunities for participation and encountering less resistance from adults.

Alternatively, it could be explained that the *madrasha* students were more regimented by the country's socialisation practices and processes than other groups of young people included in this study. The country's socialisation processes coupled with the particular type of education that the children and young people acquired through the *madrasha* system might have played a role in restricting the opportunity for this group of young people's participation in decision-making. This lack of opportunity to participate in decision-making suggests that the *madrasha* students may have encountered less resistance from adults' attitudes towards children and young people's participation in decision-making in the first place.

For instance, a group of younger *madrasha* students (boys, aged 12–13) held the view that 'it is a sin to disagree or challenge the views of adults' compared to an older *madrasha* group (boys, aged 15–16) who refused to make any comments at all that could reveal child-adult relationships in the *madrasha* setting. This finding of *madrasha* students supports the argument that *madrasha* students were more strongly socialised towards respecting the authority of adults, and therefore less likely to express themselves, and that they therefore experience less resistance.

Like young people, differences in views among adults from different professional backgrounds were also observed. Figure 4 illustrates the views of different professionals and adult groups about children and young people's participation in decision-making and discourtesy. The majority of government officials (81 percent) disagreed with the statement that children and young people's participation can be seen as discourteous, which was much higher than the percentage for other professional groups. A marginally smaller percentage (74 percent) of community members reported to having similar views to those of the government officials. In contrast, only 40 percent of professionals from CBOs disagreed with the statement.

Figure 4: Children and young people's participation in decision-making can be perceived as discourteous by adults (adult, N=253)



Thus, two groups of professionals were identified: the government officials and community on one hand, and the CBOs and the INGOs on the other. One key factor for such differences of opinions among different adult groups may be the organisational mandates and values of the INGO and CBO professionals, which could influence their views based on their greater awareness of children and young people's experiences. This difference in views suggests that adults' perceptions about constraining factors on children and young people's participation in decision-making influence the extent to which children and young people have access to participation in decision-making within various child-adult social positions.

The above discussions suggest that socialisation practices aimed at inculcating obedience, deference and conformity to adults' authority create particular child-adult social relations based on fear. Children and young people's subordination to such child-adult social relations makes children and young people regulate their behaviour in expressing themselves. The objective of such socialisation is to create children and young people's relational identity which conforms to material and non-material interdependencies in various child-adult social positions. In this socialisation process, the particular socialisation mechanism which is based on emotional and physical violence also constrains children and young people's abilities and opportunities to participate in

decision-making that affects them both individually and collectively, as discussed in Chapter Six.

Therefore, children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making are shaped by sociomoral considerations (Crivello and Boyden, 2014: 380, 385), and thereby are intricately interwoven with their relationships with adults in various social positions, as discussed in the following section.

Intergenerational relationships: influence of intergenerational power on child-adult relations

This section examines how the nature of relationships between various child-adult social positions as well as interactions between relations shapes children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making. It shows that principles of obedience and authority exist in all types of child-adult relationships examined in this study. However, the way the construction and use of obedience and authority occurs between child-adult social relations is based on the nature of power vested in various child-adult social positions. The nature of power in various social relationships, whether it is benevolent or abusive, varies across spaces and contexts as examined in the following four child-adult relationships.

'Parents are not friendly with us': parent-child relations

Two factors are important for understanding parent-child relationships at home: first, parenting and child rearing style and practice and second, communication between parents and children and young people. In this study, these factors contributed to shaping young people's experiences of distant parent-child relations as a constraining factor for young people's participation in personal decision-making. Many young people in my study stated that authoritarian parenting resulting in distant child-adult relations was one of the reasons they had limited avenues and ability to freely express their opinions in family decisions.

The following comment made by a boy (aged 16) reflects the experiences of many others in this study: 'parents will not beat you physically but emotionally. They will tell you something that will break your heart and you will not feel like expressing yourself anymore' (FGD with the Sub-district Children's Council leaders, 04.01.2008). Studies

elsewhere highlighting the tensions between parent-child relations over children and young people's protection and participation in decision-making are well documented, with such tensions contributing to distant parent-child relations as discussed in Chapter Six (Yee Pattie, 2005; Brownlie and Anderson, 2006; Sarre, 2010; Bjerke, 2011b; Kehily, 2011).

With Bangladesh being the second largest Muslim country in the world, parenting practices there can also be influenced by the Islamic parenting ideology, which extends into other parts of society such as educational institutions and work places. A number of religious leaders, community members and policy-makers in my study all highlighted the Islamic rule of disciplining children over five years of age, and consulting young people after 12 years. While the practice of disciplining and punishing children and young people does not stop beyond age 12, there was very little evidence in the data gathered that young people after age 12 were systematically consulted in decision-making.

Young people in my study repeatedly stated that their experiences of parental control and punishment made them less interested in expressing their views on matters affecting them, such as choice of subjects in school, setting their education goals and career path, private education tuition, play and recreation, use of time, choice of friends, marriage and social life. While both younger and older boys enjoyed relatively greater freedom in terms of their mobility outside the home; girls, and especially the mobility of older girls was highly restricted beyond school, private education tuition centres and home.

In a pie chart exercise that young people chose to undertake during this study the girls' group (aged 15) in one of the best schools in Tangail stated that they had 100 percent control over when to marry but they had less than 5 percent control over time use. This finding contrasted with a group of girls (aged 14–16) in a remote rural setting in Tangail who stated that they had no control over marriage but had 30 percent control over time use. Moreover, although boys enjoy greater freedom compared to girls in terms of their physical mobility outside home, boys experienced control and pressure to take on family responsibilities, as discussed in Chapter Six that also contributed to tensions in parent-child relations in constraining children and young people's agency and opportunities to pursue personal goals.

Like home, the following section shows that educational institutions offer another space for child-adult socialisation based on child-adult unequal power relations which constrains children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making in relation to education.

'Our teachers are moody and reserved, not free with us': teacher-student relations

Teacher-student relationships are crucial for enabling children and young people to freely express their views and to participate in decision-making in the educational context (Fielding, 2007; de Castro, 2011; Gallagher, 2011; Sellar, 2012; Skelton, 2012). Almost all groups of school students in my study, except the *madrasha* students who refused to comment on this topic, reported that relationships with their teachers in educational institutions were authoritarian and non-friendly. As a result, young people became fearful, and their capacity to engage in matters related to their education decreased. Thus, teacher-student relationships were regulated by a system or process of control and punishment.

Young people's accounts of their opportunity to participate in educational decision-making suggested that two factors contributed to poor teacher-student relationships in Bangladesh. They are first, the use of physical and emotional punishment for educating and controlling students and second, punishing students 'on the paper' by using threats to fail or giving poor marks, and exploitation of the School Based Assessment (SBA) system. Mohidul (boy aged 12) expressed his fear that: 'even if we do not understand the lesson in the class, we do not ask our teachers because they might get angry and we would be caned' (FGD, BB School, Tangail, 02.01.2008).

The acceptance of corporal punishment for pedagogical reasons is culturally embedded in Bangladesh as it is both legally and socially in many other countries (Freeman, 2011: 709). For instance, there is a saying that goes, 'his/her flesh is yours [teachers'] and the bones are mine [parents']'. This was a typical way of introducing a child to his or her teacher by the parents, as commented upon by some community members regarding the social approval of physical punishment as teaching style and practice especially in rural Bangladesh. According to a UNICEF report children and young people's experience of corporal punishment in school in Bangladesh was as high as 91 percent within all types of educational settings (UNICEF, 2009a: 6-7). Young people in my study strongly stated that such forms of violence make children and young people fearful of their teachers and

prevent teachers from developing authentic teacher-student relationships for children and young people's democratic education experiences.

'They keep us under threat of expulsion': children, young people-employer relations

The relationship between working children, young people and employers is one of asymmetrical power relations. Using control, exploitation and punishment to regulate working children and young people's minds and bodies reflects the asymmetrical power relationships between the social positions of employees and employers in different working situations (see for instance, Jensen, 2014). The majority of the young workers in my study are *bidi* (local cigarette) workers, motor garage mechanics, *chukri* (female child sex workers as bonded labour in a brothel), female child sex workers (daughters of sex workers born in a brothel) and female child domestics.

The young people explained their situation as low in social and moral status and described how they experienced slave-like conditions. According to Anti-Slavery International (2008: 2), contemporary slavery practices involve forced labour which compels the individual to work against their will due to the threat of some form of punishment. Asha (girl, aged 16), a *chukri*, commented that she did not have any control over her body, her life or her income as she lamented:

> How can I have any control over my life and how can I have my say over decisions if I am dependent on *Sardarni* [owner of the child sex worker]? You need to be independent and have an independent income to be able to have your say on decisions. (Interview, young female sex workers in a brothel, Tangail, 21.12.2007).

Similarly, a group of child domestics (girls, aged 11–15) reported that while their experience of physical punishment was greater at a younger age, they were subject to different forms of punishment (meaning to sexual harassment and abuse) as they grew older (FGD with female child domestics, 03.01.2008). Likewise, a group of adolescent boys (aged 14–16) who had been working in a motor garage reported that their employer often reprimanded them by saying that:

> We do not know how many years we need to do this apprenticeship. We cannot ask anything about it. We cannot negotiate with our employers regarding our salary, working hours, leave, opportunity for education and recreation. It is something like a twenty-four hour job. Even in the middle of the night while we are sleeping, *ostad* [employer] wakes us up to fix a car. If we ever express our opinion about anything, we are threatened that 'I do not need a worker like you. If you leave today, there are thousands of other Jayeed [name of the boy] waiting

> for this work'. They keep us under constant threat of expulsion. (Jayeed, boy aged 15, FGD with motor garage apprentices, 03.01.2008)

In the context of Bangladesh, other studies also report that employers often exert power by employing various disciplinary mechanisms to exploit, control and punish child and young workers (Jensen, 2007: 173). Thus, the working children and young people whose relationships with their employers are premised on economic and non-economic dependency and an unequal relationship of authority, status and power were not in a position to influence decision-making over their working lives and conditionality, including salary, benefits, working time, leave, leisure and education.

Children, young people-service providers and policy planners relations

Age-based hierarchies equally present in children and young people's relationships with service providers and policy planners. Studies elsewhere stress the importance of relationships between service providers and children and young people (Bessell, 2011b; Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2011). Children and young people's relationships with service providers and policy planners are regulated by the country's socially institutionalised age hierarchies. For instance, Bessell's (2009a: 307) study in the Philippines found that age hierarchies have implications for the practice of children and young people's participation in public policy.

In the Bangladesh context, this hierarchical social structure produces a particular child-adult relationship based on power, domination and authority, which significantly constrains children and young people's participation in service delivery and policy planning. The following sections examine young people's participation in decision-making within the framework of children, young people-institutional carer; children, young people-CBOs; children, young people-INGO and children, young people-policy planner relationships.

'Our vulnerability makes them more powerful': children, young people-residential carer relations

The views and experiences of young people in my study in two government-run and one NGO-run residential care homes reveal that the young people did not have any opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives in care homes. This finding is consistent with other research even in different contexts where children and young

people's participation in decisions is well developed in policy development (see for instance, Bessell, 2011b: 500). My findings reveal that children and young people's ability and opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives in residential care settings is greatly shaped by the nature of relationships with their carers. While all child-adult relations are generally asymmetrical, the power asymmetry in child-adult relations in residential care can take extreme notions of power, hierarchy, punishment and control (see also, Islam, 2012; Punch and McIntosh, 2014: 83-84).

In the context of my research participants, the already unequal relationships between children, young people and residential carers are further reinforced by the young people's complete dependence on the adults concerned and the young people's relative stigmatised social position. Thus, the power and relational dynamics which existed in these particular relations excluded young people from opportunities to influence policies and services in residential care homes in my study as exemplified in the following statement by a young participant (Amin, boy aged 16):

> We have a great fear of them [staff] because we are orphans. If they sack us from here, who is going to give us shelter and look after us? We do not have any choice but to become homeless. Who is going to listen to us? No one comes here to ask whether we have anything to say. Brothers [staff] do not listen to us either. So, despite all odds, we remain quiet. (FGD, girls and boys aged 14–16, Public Residential Care Home, 16.01.2008)

Similarly, young people in a private residential care also experienced fear as expressed in the following comment by a young participant (Rupa, girl, aged 15):

> They [staff] know our vulnerability. Our vulnerability makes them more powerful. We are constantly under threat that they may expel us from here and we have nowhere to go but to the brothel. They often threaten us by saying so. In fact, some older children who were already sacked from this [care] home had been forced to submit a statement that they had wanted to leave the [care] home voluntarily which was not true. (FGD, girls and boys, aged 12–13; 14–16, Private Residential Care Home, 14.01.2008)

Under such circumstances, young people did not feel safe to express their opinions, even if they had experienced extremely unpleasant situations involving various forms of control, punishment and exploitation. If on a few occasions, young people expressed their experiences, they were either not believed or no actions were taken to improve the situation. Instead, young people experienced further physical and emotional violence from the carer due to disclosure of the irregularities.

Using threats to expel children from their basic protection, as a control mechanism, was the major source of fear for young people living in these residential care homes. Therefore, young people's powerlessness, which is derived from their particular dependent social relationships with carers, significantly constrained these groups of young people's opportunity, motivation and courage to speak up. These groups of young people find themselves in a locked condition of powerlessness, voicelessness and fear (see also, Bessell, 2011b: 498) embedded in their particular relationships with carers.

'They think that we have become beyadop [discourteous]': children, young people-CBOs relations

The clash between children and young people's participation rights and the values of generation-based authority, power, and seniority and respect appears to be prominent in children, young people-CBOs relationships in my study. Such relational dynamics create power imbalances between children, young people-CBOs relations which constrained children and young people from freely participating in decision-making. This is because despite the professed ideologies and values of the organisation to respect and recognise children and young people as competent beings, there remains an expectation among the CBOs that children and young people will demonstrate certain level of respect towards adult authority.

The experiences and views of young people in my study showed that they had been motivated to express their opinions and participate in decisions, but they were not instructed about the approach, how to participate with respect. As a result, there were possibilities that children and young people's participation might be translated as impolite and disrespectful towards adults concerned, as already discussed earlier in this chapter. When asked about the indicators of maintaining respect, one CBO staff member commented:

> If an adult enters a meeting of a few children, it is expected that the children should stand up and offer a chair to the adult. But the child leaders may think that we too have rights and do not bother to show due respect to us. Even sometimes, they ask us questions that are embarrassing for us as adults. Sometimes, they forget about how to behave with adults. (Sofiqul, FGD with CBO Program Officers, 05.01.2008)

Thus, the failure of the young leaders to conform to traditional way of respecting CBO staff generated a power struggle between the staff concerned and the young leaders. Such tensions in children, young people-CBOs relationships make it difficult for young leaders

to have easy access to the CBO staff and express their views related to program activities as evident in the following statement of one young leader:

> They [CBOs] are not transparent with us. Yet, we cannot express our views to the CBOs due to fear of challenging the adult authority. If we challenge something such as any discrepancy between allocated budget and actual expenses for some Child Council program activities, they think that we have become *beyadop* [discourteous]. The relationship gets tensed and it does not work for us. (Alom, boy aged 16, FGD with Sub-district Children's Council leaders, 15.01.2008)

Therefore, children and young people's spontaneity to express themselves is hampered by the impact of positional power held by CBO staff members. The views of CBO staff members and experiences of young people in my study point to structural relationships between these two social positions that create power differences in children and young people's opportunities to freely express themselves.

'They very subtly facilitate our consultations': children, young people- INGO relations

Children and young people's relationships with INGO development practitioners are reinforced by the age hierarchy of the wider society. Certain practices of children and young people's participation within INGOs reflect the general societal attitude towards children and young people's place as being subordinate and powerless compared to adults. The power difference between these two social positions offers little incentive and scope for children and young people's opportunities to participate freely in organisational decision-making, as expressed in the following statement by a former young leader of the Children's Council, NCTF and NCP (Lily, girl, aged 17):

> A general tendency of the INGOs is to push their agenda forward in children's consultations. Especially in the early years, before any consultation, we were well instructed by mainly *Tahmina apu* (INGO field staff, female) or *Mizan bhai* (INGO field staff, male) of what to say in the meeting. A failure to do so could result in harsh criticisms such as, 'is this Shiraz? Is this our Lily? I have heard that you are so smart but you have failed to deliver what you have been told' in the public hearing session with the district government officials. (Interview, 10.02.2008)

Likewise, a Program Officer of one INGO bluntly commented, 'there is a problem with us who facilitate children's participation. We tend to dominate children's consultations by pushing our agenda forward' (Interview, 03.03.2008). Young leaders and facilitators who had been participating in various training, meetings, and consultations for a long time also made similar remarks about the subtle manipulation of the facilitating organisations to accommodate organisational agendas. As Shiraz— former leader of the

Children's Council and existing leader of the National Children's Parliament (NCP) and the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) commented:

> Whatever Sabbir Bhai[7] has decided earlier, he wants to validate his plans through consultations. The INGOs have already had their agendas in mind. They just want to validate their agendas through our consultations. As a result, they very subtly facilitate our consultations in such a way so that we identify the agendas that they have already set. (Interview, 15.02.2008)

Therefore, power and control evident in this child-adult social position regulate children and young people's participation in decision-making processes in the development sector. Hierarchical relations between children, young people and the INGOs are also reflected in the designing of participatory projects without always ensuring children and young people's feedback at the final stage. Although initially issues were identified by local level consultations with children and young people, the final proposal may lack children and young people's input such as in setting activities and targets.

As a result, development projects may appear to be too demanding and ambitious in engaging children and young people in project activities by leaving little room for them to control choices of time use and meeting other competing demands such as education and household labour. The issue of INGOs' exclusive power to set the condition of children and young people's participation in service delivery was aptly made by one field-based INGO Program Officer:

> Annually, there are 54 activities targeted under the Child Council. If children have to engage themselves in these 54 activities, they will not have time for their own studies. There was no sharing with the children concerned or with the [INGO] field staff, who implement the project at community level, in developing and finalising project proposal. Eventually, such ambitious project achieves nothing but preparing 99% of the CARD[8] graduating children to become garment workers. (Interview, 12.02.2008)

In this way, generation-based as well as institutional-based power and authority play out in children and young people-INGO relationships which offer little opportunity for children and young people to greatly contribute to setting the agenda for policy planning and service delivery of the development sector.

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[7] 'Sabbir' is the name of the Country Director of one INGO and 'Bhai' refers to brother and is used to address a male adult with respect.

[8] CARD stands for Child Access to Rights through Development, name of the Children's Councils project.

'It is quite frustrating because of our tokenistic representation': children, young people-policy planners relations

Children and young people's relationships with government policy planners are relatively less democratic than children and young people's relationships with the INGOs. Relationships between children, young people and government policy planners are more power laden. Young people in my study reported that they did not have any direct involvement with government planners.

Due to lobbying and advocacy by the INGOs working on child rights issues in Bangladesh, the government officials usually ask the Save the Children Alliance to 'send two children' for consultation in the various government committee meetings related to children and young people. Two young people were included in each of the four committees for preparation of the National Plan of Action for Children (2005–2010).

Having two children sitting in the government committee meetings was highly disempowering for children and young people as stated in the following comment by a young leader (Amirul, boy, aged 17):

> We usually do not find government meetings interesting and enjoyable. At one level, it is quite empowering for us to be able to contribute to government meetings. But at another level, it is quite frustrating because of our tokenistic representation. In such a circumstance, we get quite tensed, anxious, and nervous because we are only two children among all adults and the meetings are not child-friendly. We often get short notice to attend this kind of meeting and we do not have sufficient preparation to contribute to the meeting. It happens that we travel the whole night from a district to attend the meeting at the secretariat on the next day. The objective of such participation is very ambiguous to us. By inviting two of us once in a while in this kind of meeting we feel that the government just want to claim in their reports that they have ensured children's participation. (Interview, 16.02.2008)

Thus, power and control of participatory spaces can be more acute as per the hierarchical nature between two social positions such as children, young people and the government policy planners. Such unequal relations create few opportunities for children and young people to freely express themselves in government decision-making processes regarding children and young people.

In this section I have discussed generational structures of children and young people's social relations with adults which impact on children and young people's ability and opportunity to participate in decisions and the actual choices they make regarding their participation. I have demonstrated that child-adult relations in various social positions create power differences through exchange of various material and non-material

resources. I have argued that children and young people's participation in public decisions is therefore greatly shaped by power created through relational dynamics within the spaces of various interdependent child-adult social positions.

The above findings have implications for children and young people's participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces. First, children and young people's participation in decisions is embedded in children and young people's lack of positional power in various child-adult social positions. Therefore, child-adult relations in various social positions are regulated by age hierarchy, control, punishment, and power. Such relational dynamics point to considering age patriarchy and cultural politics of childhood in addressing children and young people's participation in decisions.

Second, there is a need to especially focus on the social position between two relations such as parent-child, teacher-student, child worker-employer and child-service providers and policy planners. This analysis is important to understand and explore the power in relational dynamics present in these various social positions in intergenerational relations.

Third, it is important to consider relations between relations. If the dominant character of child-adult relations in Bangladesh is obedience and authority, it is crucial to examine the internal relationships between these two concepts, obedience and authority. This is because it is important to understand the way these two concepts intersect and are reproduced and transformed in constricting children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making, and the impact on actual choices they make regarding their participation.

Briefly, it is crucial to examine the internal relations or processes through which children and young people's lack of power is derived, which contribute to their multiple forms of exclusion from influencing decisions in various child-adult social positions.

Like intergenerational structure, children and young people's participation in decisions is also constrained by children and young people's intra-generational social relations as discussed in the following section.

Intra-generational relationships: influence of intra-generational power on peer relations

Like intergeneration, intra-generational power relations exist among peers that cause children and young people's social exclusion and shape their experiences of agency to participate in private as well as in social settings (Redmond, 2009: 541, 544-545; Konstantoni, 2012; Haavind et al., 2014: 1-2, 12). Intra-generational power relations between sibling relations are well documented (Punch, 2005; Punch, 2008; Bacon, 2012). Children and young people's opportunity to express themselves is also thus shaped by the intra-generational power relations between children and young people, as commented by one young girl participant in my study: 'if you have elder siblings at home, you cannot participate'(Interview, girl aged 12, JH School, 20.11.2007).

Similarly, in school settings, older young people tend to dominate younger children and young people in participating in decisions. A group of younger girls (aged 12–13, BBG School, 02.01.2008) expressed their disappointment and explained how they were obstructed from expressing their views on various occasions by older girls in upper grades.

For instance, older girls in upper grades are mainly responsible for organising the performance of the annual religious or graduating function in the school. The younger girls claimed that they could sing well, however the older girls did not allow the younger girls to perform in these ceremonies. To protect the older girls' interests, the older girls made a suggestion to the teachers which became the rule in the school that only the older girls in upper grades would perform in the annual school ceremonies.

One younger girl (Shima, aged 13) commented reflecting other girls' frustrations:

> The sisters [older girls] tell us that 'you do not need to participate in these programs because you are too young'. In fact, they have a fear that we may outperform them. In that case, the teachers may not give them the chance to participate anymore but to invite us – the younger group – to perform. The sisters subtly excluded us from contributing to making the school rules. (FGD with BB School girls, aged 12–13)

Thus, generation-based control and power also exist in peer relationships in older and younger children in various settings including family and school. The issue of intra-generational power and dominance was also reported by a group of Children's Council leaders (boys aged 14–17). The Children's Council leaders suggested that following

adults' practice the older young people in the Children's Council are unfriendly with the younger members and tend to control them. The group commented that older young people had the tendency to imitate adults as revealed in the following statement of one young leader (Rofiq, boy, aged 16):

> When we experience adult practice of exercising control and domination over us, we apply the same practice on to younger children. It could be the reason when children become adults, they cannot change their attitude and behaviour and therefore treat children the same way they had been treated in their own childhood. (FGD with sub-district Children's Council leaders, 16.02.2008)

The Children's Council leaders commented that friendly relations were not only important in adult-child relations but also in peer relations in order to enable younger children and young people to freely express themselves. The young people in my study explained how older young leaders in the Children's Council controlled the younger groups regarding distribution of sports and play materials or in various programs where older groups mainly make the decisions and asked younger members to perform the responsibilities or follow the rules. This practice was confirmed by the younger members (FGD, boys, aged 12–13) in separate meetings who expressed their frustration that, 'older members always take an upper hand' (Jobair, boy, aged 13, FGD with girls and boys, aged 12–13, 12.10.2007).

Drawing on the above insights, the following section illustrates how intra-generational power influences various peer relations based on young people's social skills and networks; gender, generation and physical attributes; class; different abilities; and minority status due to ethnicity, caste and birth identity.

'Bobita not only senior among us but also the most articulate and maintains networks': influence of social skills and networks on peer relations

Children and young people's capacity, social skills and networks—all contribute to exercising power and influence in intra-generational relationships in constraining children and young people's agency to freely express their opinion. A group of young leaders of the Children's Council (mixed gender, aged 14–16) stated that peer relationships could be controlled by the most articulate peers irrespective of gender. Siraj (boy, aged 16) explained that when a news agency proposed to hold a face to face dialogue with the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) district leaders in Tangail regarding child rights issues, Bobita (girl, aged 17), the most articulate and assertive among the

group, vetoed the proposal. The reason was to avoid increased workload for Bobita. Although all other seven NCTF leaders wanted to be involved with the news agency and were eager to hold the dialogue, Bobita's persistence made the arguments of others obsolete. Siraj (boy, aged 16) expressed his frustration:

> Bobita, not only senior among us but also the most articulate and maintains networks. She has many social skills and qualities. She won the prizes of district and national-level child competitions on impromptu speech and cultural programs. She is also a member of the National Child Parliament. Bobita is very proud and considers that she knows best. She does not care about others and anyhow she tends to establish whatever she wants. (FGD with District NCTF members, 20.02.2008)

Similarly, some young girls (aged 14–16) identified that peer relations were influenced by the educational performance and social network of peers. They noted that those peers who were good students and had information such as which private coaching centres offered good services or good teachers in other schools, dominated the decisions among peers in selecting private coaching or tuition. As Alya (girl, aged 15) commented:

> Our friends try to influence us to attend the same coaching or private that they are attending. Since they know very well and they have acceptance not only among peers but also among our parents because they are good students. Instead of pursuing our own goal we tend to listen to them. (FGD with Sub-district Children's Council leaders, 11.01.2008)

The attitude survey findings with young people also confirmed this finding that the social acceptance of children and young people, as being a 'good' girl or boy in terms of educational performance and moral character, influences young people's participation in decisions not only in relation to adults but also among peers. In this way, children and young people's social skills, educational performance and networks allowed some young people considerable power to exercise in peer relationships as evident in my study. In these specific examples, along with generation-based power, children and young people's social skills, networks and reputation preceded over gender identity. In the context of Bangladesh, children are socialised to take specific gender roles, which requires girls to maintain ideal femininity by being in private, less assertive and silent as slightly touched upon in Chapters Four and Six in this thesis. Therefore, reputation and social skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, effective communication and interpersonal relationships developed through children's network activities enabled young girls considerable power to develop confidence and raise their voices which is not conventional in traditional Bangladeshi society.

'Because she was young and beautiful too': influence of gender, generation and physical attributes on peer relations

The intra-generational power relations can also be based on gender, generation and physical attributes. A number of older young leaders of the Children's Council narrated the practice of gender and generation-based power and control by some Children's Council leaders (older boys, who were still involved in INGO program at the national level children and young people's networks of NCTF and NCP). This practice of older young leaders (boys) was also confirmed by a comment made by a former leader of the Children's Council (Mohsin, boy aged 19)[9]:

> We used to organise the group in such a way so that there was at least one beautiful girl in our group. There was always a competition among us, leaders, about who was going to get her [Razia] in our group because she was beautiful and young. It was easier for us to manipulate her because she was young and beautiful too. (Interview, 12.03.2008)

The former leader of the Children's Council (Razia, girl aged 17) who voluntarily withdrew from the Children's Council shared her experience of the above mentioned gender and generation-based power and control among peer relations within the Children's Council programs:

> I was only 12 years old when I became the deputy speaker of the National Children's Parliament. But I found it difficult to participate in program activities especially those organised at national and district levels. As I was too young and beautiful, the older leaders [boys] tended to disturb me in various ways so that I had to depend on them to perform my responsibilities as a Child Leader and especially in that position of the Deputy Speaker of the Child Parliament. I found it difficult to challenge the power and control of the older boy leaders because they had already 'gained popularity' within the organisations [CBOs and INGO] and they knew very well how to manipulate the staff in their own favour. (Interview, 16.02.2008)

When asked why she did not consider reporting her experiences to the INGO or the CBO, Razia said that she had feared that the staff in either the INGO or the CBO would not trust her allegations against the older boy leaders who had reputations within the organisations. Thus, power of gender, generation and social skills played out in peer relations and such relational dynamics constrained Razia's agency to freely express her feelings and experiences to the authority concerned in relation to her participation in organisational activities.

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[9] I also interviewed a few former leaders of the Children's Councils who were still holding leadership positions at the National Children's Parliament and the National Children's Task Force.

'Because they are *borolok* [rich people] and influential': influence of class on peer relations

Along with social skills, gender, generation and physical attributes, there is intra-generational influence of class in creating power imbalance in peer relationships. Especially some older young people (aged 14–16) in my study drew on the issue of class in influencing peer relationships. The young people noted that money, position such as father being the elected chairman of the locality, and associated influence structured peer relationships.

A group of older boys reported that while they wanted to play cricket, none of them had the capacity to buy cricket sets. Thus, they had selected one of their economically well-off peers as their leader who bought cricket sets for the team. The power of class on peer relations is evident in the following statement of a young participant regarding terms of decisions about playing cricket (Deepak, boy, aged 14):

> Although he is not *boro* [senior or older] in terms of age but in terms of money that dictates the relationships among us. If he says something that we do not approve or appreciate, we still need to listen to him. Because they are *borolok* and influential. He creates some kind of pressures on us to accept whatever he decides. (FGD, Sub-District Children's Council leaders, 11.02.2008)

Another young boy participant (Utpal, aged 16) in the same group remarked:

> As I cannot contribute to buying the sports materials, I do not mind accepting his authority though I dislike his bossy attitude. He often makes the decisions regarding the play…even though I do not have a voice regarding making any rules for the play, my satisfaction is that at least I can play cricket. (FGD, District Children's Councils leaders, 11.02.2008)

Like boys, some girls also noted the class influence on peer relationships which constrains young people's capacity to freely express themselves. Juli (girl, aged 15) commented that her wealthy friend (Ritu, aged 15) whom she accompanied to attend private education tuition every-day always sets the terms of decisions about transportation. As Juli expressed her frustration:

> Although Ritu does not have to worry about money, she is very miser. Every day, Ritu decides that she will pay the early morning fair which is lower and I should pay the return fair which is a bit higher than the morning trip. I cannot say anything on her face because they are *borolok* [rich people] and influential in our locality. (Interview with Religious Minority girls, aged 14–16, 05.01.2008)

The above examples suggest that class significantly shapes children and young people's participation in decisions in peer relations, which constrains some young people's agency and opportunities to freely express their opinion. Children and young people's different ability (disability) also greatly shapes peer relationships as discussed below.

'They never treat me as one of them': influence of different abilities on peer relations

Children and young people's different ability in terms of physical, mental and intellectual capacity also influences peer relationships. A group of young people (mixed gender, aged 12–13) expressed that young people's different abilities created hierarchical relationships between peers. For instance, a boy (Babu, aged 12 with physical disability) who drew a picture of a handicapped boy being ignored by his peers in the playing field narrated his experience in writing that his opportunity for playing sport depended on good will and decision of his peers. Another girl (Beneta, aged 15) with a physical disability commented that she was underestimated by her friends in the school and in private tuition as expressed in her following statement:

> My friends always tend to dominate the group whenever we are in a private educational coaching session. Even, my friends do not want to share educational material or information with me but they do share with other peers. And they do not welcome me well in their group. Even they do not cordially receive my phone calls. They maintain a visible *parthokho* [hierarchy, distinction] between themselves and me. They never treat me equally and never allow me to fully participate with them. They never treat me as one of them. Their neglect sometimes makes me cry. As a result, I cannot speak up my needs and I cannot influence education related decisions in the coaching center. (Interview, 15.01.2008)

In this way, different ability influences on peer relations which negatively impact on children and young people's behavioural capacity to express themselves. Among four young participants with different abilities in this study, only one boy (aged 12, ZH School) with physical disability stated that his close friends tried to understand him. This made it easier for him to express himself with his peers than with his teachers in the school.

'The big fishes eat up the small fishes': influence of ethnicity, caste and birth identity on peer relations

Ethnicity, caste and birth identity are another markers of discrimination in peer relationships. The particular ethnicity, caste, and birth identity of children and young

people determines the relative power that a group of children and young people hold over another group. Children and young people's experiences gained through this study revealed that this exercise of power over minority children and young people by their majority peers is in line with the country's practice of domination and exclusion of minority groups by the majority Bengali people.

Young people of a minority ethnic group (Mandy) in my study explained how their ethnic minority identity subjected them to experiencing violence by their majority Bengali peers at school and at community. The relationships between Bengali and ethnic minority children and young people were characterised by violence and power exercised by the majority Bengali children and young people over the minority ethnic children and young people. The forms of violence that shaped the peer relationships between the children and young people of these two communities were verbal, emotional, physical and sexual in nature.

Thus, experiences of violence at the hands of their Bengali peers made the Mandy ethnic minority children and young people less motivated to express themselves regarding their participation in school and community life. Drawing on the metaphor, 'the big fishes eat up the small fishes' the Mandy young people signalled the exercise of power and domination in peer relations (Suruj, boy aged 16, FGD with Mandy Ethnic Minority young people, 14.10.2007).

To illustrate, lack of proficiency in Bangla language was a source of harassment that characterised the peer relationships between ethnic minority Mandy and the majority Bengali speaking children and young people. The Mandy young people in my study frustratingly commented that they had to remain very quiet at school and in community life. They experienced harassment and insults by their classmates and other peers due to their difficulty in pronouncing Bengali words and constructing proper Bengali sentences as one Mandy girl (Tuli, girl, aged 11) commented:

> Whenever I gave class reading, the Bengali peers started laughing at me. I felt embarrassed due to my poor pronunciation. I felt upset and did not want to talk to the Bengali peers at all. I often got harassed by my Bengali peers, but the teachers usually did not punish them. I cannot express my feelings that their behaviour seriously hurts me and forces me to remain silent in the class. (FGD, 09.09.2007)

As the Mandy children and young people learnt different alphabets used in their ethnic language, they found it hard to pronounce certain Bengali words. Therefore, Mandy children and young people were often ridiculed by their Bengali peers due to their difficulty in pronunciation and speaking appropriate Bangla language. Mainly the younger girls and boys (aged 12–13) noted that due to feelings of insult and embarrassment, they tended to communicate less with their Bengali peers and express themselves less. They seemed to accept the views of their Bengali peers whenever they played together or did something jointly such as school projects.

Language issues were only one aspect of the power dynamics in peer relations between the ethnic minority and the majority Bengali peers. The way in which the Mandy young people were treated by Bengali peers at school, on the street and at community life was an important aspect of young people's feelings of shame, discrimination and powerlessness which made them less communicative with their Bengali peers. As one boy commented, 'the way our Bengali peers treat us, it is a blow to our heart, which makes us more and more quiet' (Suruj, boy, aged 16). Similarly, a group of younger Mandy boys reflected on their painful memories as revealed in a statement of one of the group members (Bipul, boy, aged 12):

> If we visit the Bengali populated community, we are often ridiculed as *garo* [calling name] by the Bengali peers which is derogatory for us. By calling us *garo*, they have already attacked us emotionally, now we have nothing to do but to remain quiet. Calling us as *garo* is a strategy the Bengali peers often use to intentionally insult us and restrain us from doing something such as taking part in discussions among Bengali peers or playing with them. The result of such an insult on us is that we become more reserved and less forthcoming to socialise with them. We tend not to resist any oppression committed by our Bengali peers. (FGD with Mandy Ethnic group, aged 12–13, 07.09.2007)

Moreover, the Mandy young people reported that the older (aged 14–16) Mandy girls were subjected to harassment by their Bengali peers due to their traditional clothing. Remarks were often targeted to the older ethnic girls that they 'did not have any shame', as they wore *dokma* (traditional outfit) which left some of their body parts such as neck, arms, belly and the lower portion of their legs uncovered. The young people felt emotional stress and frustration due to such psychological attacks by their Bengali peers, which made them less interactive in peer relations.

Besides, the Mandy young boys were verbally, emotionally and physically abused by their Bengali peers due to their eating habits and clothing. They noticed that the images portrayed in primary level text books about minority ethnic people's life style were

distorted. They viewed the information about ethnic people in school text books such as, 'ethnic people prefer to eat snakes, frogs, and dogs, and they wear *lengty* (small piece of cloth to cover only the genital area)' as quite offensive. The young people strongly resisted the images portraying about their life style in the text books. While it could have been the practice in the long past, it was no longer practiced in modern times, as they remarked. Only some of their grandfathers still preferred to wear the traditional cloth of *lengty* but not everybody, and not certainly males of their generation.

Thus, from the very beginning, Bengali peers grow up with images misrepresented by the official ideology about minority ethnic people. One girl challenged this official view of their majority Bengali peers about minority ethnic people and the process of developing text curriculum without consultation with the group concerned as she commented (Merita, girl, aged 14):

> Have they [curriculum designer] ever consulted us about what we eat, and how we lead our life? If you want to write about us, you need to live with us, experience with us about our way of living. (FGD, Mandy ethnic group, aged 14–16, 07.09.2007)

The distortion generated and promoted by the official ideology about ethnic minority people was used by the Bengali peers as a constant source of humiliation to their minority ethnic peers, making the latter feel emotionally inferior, and subject to the control and power of their majority Bengali peers. The Mandy young people were also subjected to emotional and verbal abuse by their Bengali peers due to their distinct physical features. The Bengali peers often made comments such as, 'they have eyes like pigs', 'their noses are smashed', 'their legs look like the legs of an elephant', and 'they eat oysters' (FGD, Mandy Ethnic Minority girls and boys, aged 12-16, 08.09.2007).

One Mandy ethnic boy (Biklu, aged 13) commented with frustration that:

> We are not responsible for our physical features. Yet, we are constantly subjected to tease and harassment by the Bengali peers. This is because of the Bengali peers want to dominate and control us. Due to fear of being bullied, we usually prefer not to react to comments made towards us, or to disagree with them, or to enter any arguments with the Bengali peers. For instance, even if they make any mistakes, I usually do not tell them anything. If they violate any rules when we play together, I ignore and remain quiet. This way they make us silence. (FGD, 09.09.2007)

Similarly, strategy such as attacking minority ethnic children and young people physically by the Bengali peers was also common only to exercise power over the ethnic minority

children and young people leading to more uneven peer relations. As evident in my data, use of physical violence and threats of physical abuse were often employed as a successful strategy by the Bengali peers to dominate and control their ethnic minority peers. The older boys from Mandy ethnic minority group (aged 14–16) frustratingly narrated various stories and techniques of physical violence by the Bengali boys to them. Older boys were more targeted by physical violence than younger people. There were incidences where older ethnic minority boys were severely beaten up by the Bengali boys as the latter had lost in a football match.

On another occasion, ethnic minority boys were threatened by their Bengali peers with breaking their legs if they attended the district-level football match. In such incidences, when the minority ethnic young people informed their teachers about the actual physical violence and threats, instead of taking action against the Bengali boys, teachers discouraged the ethnic minority boys from participating in the match. One younger Mandy boy commented, 'this way *bijatira* [a negative expression of not of our tribe] gain more power to exercise over us, because they know that they are not going to be punished' (Bipul, aged 13, FGD, girls and boys aged 12–13, Mandy ethnic minority group, 07.09.2007). The ethnic minority young people's experiences of threats and violence by their Bengali peers acted as a deterrent for the ethnic minority peers to express themselves in their peer relationships, which were loaded with control, domination and power.

Like ethnic minority, birth identity is another constituting factor for the social identity of children and young people born to a prostitute mother that results in their marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream society. Girls and boys born in a brothel but who were now living in an institutional care home experienced stigma and therefore lack of opportunities to participate in personal decision-making such as socialisation and friendship. Parents of other children did not allow friendship with these young people. This particular group of young people were not allowed to invite friends into the residential care home either. Such restrictions constrained these young people in developing friendships with their classmates and other children and young people in society. One girl (Lutfa, aged 14) expressed her frustration echoing the experiences of other girls:

> If we were allowed to bring our girlfriends into our Safe Home, and they could see where we live and how we live, then they would have a good impression about us. Gradually, they would accept us and would not hate us that much as they do now and now they do not socialise with us. Eventually, we end up socialising only with ourselves who are from this

> Safe Home. We could not make any friends in school and we cannot express our feelings to anyone. (Private residential care home, 14.01.2008)

The above accounts point to the way the social identity of these girls depicts them as polluted and impure. This particular identity profoundly shaped these girls' personal experiences in making choices regarding friendships and socialisation.

Like ethnicity and birth identity, caste is another determinant in constituting social identity among children and young people in constraining young people's ability and opportunity to express themselves freely. This identity also limited young people's opportunities to influence personal decisions, especially their participation in public life, socialisation and friendship. Young people from a sweeper community in my study experienced marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion by mainstream society due to their caste status.

The sweeping caste is considered as untouchable in the Hindu vision of personal pollution, and experiences seclusion widely practiced in South Asia. Both girls and boys from the sweeper community reported experiences of marginalisation and discrimination by the wider Bengali society. Yet, girls were subject to greater discrimination than boys which differently shaped their experiences of peer relations as stated in the following comment by an adolescent girl participant (Joya, girl, aged 16):

> Nobody treats us as human beings but as sweepers. We, just like garbage, are dumped in a corner of the town. Unlike boys, almost all adolescent girls in our community have become dropped out from school… No one wanted to sit beside me in the classroom. I could not discuss my education or anything with anyone. I did not have any friends in the school... Gradually, I dropped out of school at Grade Eight last year. They showed such an attitude as if I smelled. (FGD, girls, aged 14–16, Sweeper Community, 04.12.2007)

In this way, ethnicity, birth identity and caste act as dominant structures in the society in shaping experiences of children and young people in personal decisions such as education, socialisation, making friendships and thereby influence peer relationships.

In this section I have discussed the ways structures of intra-generational power relations shape peer relations in terms of self-expression and participation in personal decisions such as education, socialisation and friendships. I have demonstrated that asymmetrical power relations exist between children and young people, reflecting wider hierarchical structures of Bangladeshi society. In this way, children and young people not only internalise social rules and norms but also actively contribute to producing and

reproducing the oppressive social structures and patterns that exist between adults in society (Corsaro, 2005; Harju, 2013: 158). The young people's engagement with 'interpretative reproduction' (Corsaro, 2005) points to the power of social structures from which some groups of children and young people's power emanates.

I have argued that generational membership based on diversified social identities profoundly shapes peer relationships in restricting children and young people's opportunities to influence decisions in peer relations. I have also demonstrated that a lack of respect and recognition in some peer interactions causes widespread exclusion of some children and young people in shaping their experiences of personal decisions regarding education, socialisation and friendship.

These analyses offer some implications for children and young people's participation in decisions. First, specific peer cultures are interwoven across spaces and contexts. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise the influence of intersections of different social structures that constitute powerlessness and thereby voicelessness in peer relations.

Second, children and young people's own role in conforming to or negotiating with social structures is important in understanding social practices that result in multiple exclusions of some groups of children and young people from influencing decisions.

Finally, it is important to understand how particular socialisation practices in a context help children and young people in acquiring values and attitudes that guide their interactions in peer relations.

Conclusions

Children and young people are embedded in asymmetrical social and political relationships with adults as well as with peers. Children and young people's embeddedness in particular relationships generates power differences. Therefore, children and young people's positions, roles and responsibilities are largely determined within the spaces and contexts of children and young people's social and political relations within various child-child and child-adult social positions.

As demonstrated in this chapter, children and young people's structural positions within asymmetrical social relations shape children and young people's opportunities to control

and influence interactions with adults as well as with peers in influencing decisions. In this regard, socioeconomic and cultural processes through which children and young people experience their childhood suggest that their relationships with adults and with peers are structured by the broader socialisation and education practices of Bangladesh.

As revealed in my analyses, two distinct features characterise the socialisation processes of children and young people in Bangladesh in general and in Tangail in particular. They are strict adherence to social norms and values of age-based authority, conformity, obedience, and deference, and the use of physical and emotional violence and control to socialise and educate children and young people. Both these processes lead to hierarchical child-adult relationships. These hierarchical child-adult relations in Bangladesh are therefore shaped by generational power relations from which children and young people's lack of power to influence decisions is derived.

In this analysis, it is significant to consider that in Majority World contexts such as in Bangladesh, discipline norms are integral to a totality of social relations. Other researchers also note that traditional farming requires children and young people disciplined to labour to fulfil individuals' allocated responsibilities for household survival (for instance, Pupavac, 2011). Discipline and control mechanisms activated through physical and emotional violence, and embedded in socialisation practices in Bangladesh are permeated in educational institutions and in work places.

As I demonstrated in the context of family relations, adult power is considered to be positive, aimed at protecting children and young people's interests as well as the interests of the household. Parental benevolent power is exercised in a context of real risk and danger posed by the threat of abuse, harm and violence prevalent in society. In this way, children and young people's real vulnerability to the external environment also limits their agency, which is further reinforced by the absence of a welfare society.

Like intergeneration, intra-generational power relations exist between children and young people themselves which are based on power asymmetry. Such asymmetrical power relations between peers are further intersected by structural differences leading to multiple social exclusions of some groups of children and young people from influencing decisions affecting their choices on personal issues such as education, socialisation, education and friendships.

An examination of intergenerational and intra-generational relations confirms that power is integral in all types of children and young people's social relations that constrain their agency and opportunities to participate in decisions in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. The gravity of power is influenced by various structural forces of gender, generation, class, parents' education and employment status, ethnicity, caste, disability, geographical location, social and birth identity, children and young people's social skills and social networks.

Therefore, children and young people's participation in decision-making is greatly shaped by larger social and political relations existing in a particular space such as in Tangail or broadly in Bangladesh and in between various child-adult and child-child social positions. The above findings have implications for children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them.

First, the nature of child-adult relations in various social positions is one of the structuring factors of children and young people's participation in decisions. Another structuring factor is the children and young people's relationships with peers. Taking a sociocultural approach to examine the generational relationships is thus helpful to identify and analyse children and young people's transactions with adults and peers as well as with social structures. Such analysis is necessary to find out the constitutive factors in the social ordering and organising of child-adult and child-child relations to address the structural barriers of children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Second, children and young people's embeddedness in networks of interactions and relations suggests that children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decisions is primarily shaped by their socialisation and learning processes. Such socialisation and learning processes are rooted in the norms, values, practices and overall conventions of the family and wider society.

Therefore, identifying the specific conventions is crucial for understanding the exchange of various material and non-material resources in interactions and relations in generational relationships that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decisions. In the context of Tangail specifically and in Bangladesh generally, the specific conventions that guide generational relationships are the social

values of reciprocity and interdependency embodied through the observance of norms of duty, obedience, deference, morality, and conformity.

Third, the interplay of power and identity difference shaping the participatory spaces of various generational relationships necessitates us to understand the normative understanding of space. Therefore, in addition to analysing material and procedural factors, it is important to analyse sociocultural practices to understand various exclusionary processes through which children and young people are marginalised in the participatory spaces of generational relationships.

An analysis of the cultural politics of childhood is therefore necessary to examine significant sociocultural practices through which identities, social relations, and rules shape various participatory spaces of intergenerational and intra-generational relationships. It requires us to pay particular attention to the implicit and underlying assumptions about children and young people's social and political relations in the organisation and constitution of spaces for their political participation. It shows how particular socialisation interactions in various relational spaces significantly contribute to children and young people's acquisition of ideas, norms and social values in shaping their intersubjectivity in relation to their participation in decisions.

It therefore calls our attention to the deeper political and subjective factors regarding the intersubjectivity of children and young people's political participation. Reconceptualising participation in terms of children and young people's social and political relations, and a distinction between children and young people's participation in political processes and participation in everyday practices is therefore needs to be considered as both a theoretical and practical necessity (see also Fischer, 2006; Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2011; Thomas, 2012a).

Finally, analysing children and young people's participation along the lines of gender, generation, class, ethnicity, caste, religion, and birth identity as well as other differences has enabled a better understanding of how social identity shapes girls' and boys' abilities and opportunities to participate in decision-making. An intersectional analysis therefore is helpful to explain how ethnicity, birth identity, caste, class, age, religion and gender intersect in constructing moral identity of children and young people. Highlighting this socially constructed nature of symbolic boundaries in creating structural inequalities

within society reveals how local relations of power systematically exclude some children and young people from opportunities to participate in decision-making that affects their lives.

The analyses of children and young people's participation therefore need to take into account the power of children and young people in their engagement and negotiation with social structures, and thereby how these contribute to producing and maintaining the cultural norms and values within which children and young people's participation in decision-making occurs or does not occur.

By interpreting social and cultural practices, I have underscored the importance of reconceptualising children and young people's participation as transactions between children and young people's self and social institutions and systems. Children and young people negotiate their identities in relation to others. Children and young people's participation in decision-making therefore needs to be viewed as socio-spatial practices, relational in nature. This conceptualisation points to a need to investigate children and young people's participation in the context of children and young people's negotiated identities in varied social spaces and contexts of intergenerational and intra-generational relationships as demonstrated in this chapter.

Along with socioeconomic and cultural processes, equally important is to investigate socio-political processes of children and young people's social exclusion from influencing policies and services in public spaces that I discuss next in Chapter Eight.

Chapter 8 Social and political exclusion: children and young people's participation in the context of their structural exclusion from the State

Introduction

In order to understand the nature of public spaces that constrict children and young people from communicating and contributing politically, it is important to investigate children and young people's relationships with the state. In this chapter I therefore investigate children and young people's relationships with the state by exploring various institutional processes that contribute to children and young people's social and political exclusion (see also, Redmond, 2009). I demonstrate how the political and development frameworks of Bangladesh create a particular political context that limits translating the ideal of children and young people's participation in public decision-making into practice. Analysing this political context is critical in understanding how both government and development agencies in Bangladesh create space, or do not create space, for children and young people's participation in respective governance decision-making and services.

Drawing on the concept of social exclusion (Sen, 2000; Hill et al., 2004), I argue that two major factors contribute to children and young people's exclusion from influencing public decision-making and service provisions. These are: first, official ideologies of childhood; and second, inadequate institutional processes. I conclude by delineating how these socio-political factors create particular public spaces that deny children and young people as political actors and exclude children and young people from influencing policies and services, from organisational structures and mechanisms, and from experiencing democratic education.

Sen (2000: 45-47) conceptualises social exclusion within the framework of freedoms and capabilities and thereby the potential of social exclusion lies in its focus on the multidimensionality of deprivation and relational processes. In this thesis, the concept of social exclusion refers to processes through which certain groups are 'marginalised, omitted or stigmatised' on the basis of their differences from the majority, and the unwillingness of the majority to accept the marginalised (Hill et al., 2004: 79). Thus, social exclusion can be described as the result of complex interplays of social relations

rather than the result of a single cause or dimension that causes certain individuals and groups to be marginalised and disadvantaged (Prout and Tisdall, 2006: 237).

This chapter is structured into four sections. The first section explores official ideologies that cause children and young people's structural exclusion from participating in public decision-making. The second section focuses on how inadequate institutional processes sideline the systematic incorporation of children and young people's perspectives into policy-making and policy implementation. Taken together, in section three and section four I draw out the implications of various social and structural exclusions on children and young people's participation in influencing both public and development policies and major services such as education in Bangladesh.

'Children are not stakeholders': official ideologies and structural exclusion

> Children are not stakeholders. Children do not fall under the category of stakeholders. Our stakeholders are basically the line ministries, civil society, economists and business groups. Children do not fall under macro policy issues, the national level planning. They can be an issue for local level government and schools. There are Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs and Ministry of Education; we are not concerned about children's issues. (Interview, Finance Secretary, Bangladesh Government, 16.03.2008)

Official ideologies that do not recognise and value children and young people as stakeholders largely exclude children and young people from influencing policies and services in a traditional, patriarchal society such as Bangladesh. In discussing the role of ideologies in influencing policies, Bessell (2009a: 304) defines sectors or stakeholders as interest groups who hold a formal space in policy processes. Traditionally, official ideologies are supported by the attitudes and thinking of policy planners, which do not consider children and young people as stakeholders but view children and young people as incompetent and value them only as future citizens.

Thus, normative and ideological views held by adults about children and young people's capabilities, moral status, and entitlements tend to restrict children and young people's inclusion in policy decisions (see also, Qvortrup, 1999; Davis and Hill, 2006: 10). Apart from their immediate networks, and communities, children and young people's lives and relationships from very early childhood are therefore greatly shaped by not only resources and policies but also by the attitudes and beliefs of adults towards children and young people (Hill and Tisdall, 1999: 6).

Ideas, values and beliefs have a profound influence on policies (Bessell, 2011a: 567). For instance, 10 of the 13 policy planners interviewed in my study categorically negated the idea of children and young people as stakeholders and thereby vehemently opposed children and young people's participation in policy planning and services as evident in the following statement by the Secretary of Law of the Bangladesh Government:

> Feedback can be sought from teachers, psychologists and guardians who supervise children; who better understand children's issues than children themselves. Teachers understand child psychology better. Children's permanent interests must be greater than their present interests. Parents, guardians know children's best interest. Children do not have the capacity to understand their own interests. Those who have ownership over children, such as parents and guardians, their opinions are more important and valuable than children's opinions. It is not a seriously felt issue to consult children. It is not a must to consult with children. But with adults, it is a must. (Interview, 16.03.2008)

Thus, the Law Secretary stressed the role of guardians and the future interests of children and young people while systematically dismissing the capacity of children and young people and thereby children and young people's present interests. Echoing previous views, the Secretary of Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs of the Bangladesh Government commented:

> Their [Western] culture teaches children to express their opinions, but this is not a priority in our culture. Our priority is to address poverty, natural disasters etc. There is no need to ensure children's participation in the processes of fulfilling their basic needs. Children's opinions were sought in preparation of the UNCRC report. But I do not think that they were able to contribute that much. It is more important to fulfil their immediate needs, poverty. We cannot even implement the PRSP[10] where children's participation was ensured. There is no reason to think that children's participation can bring much change in the policies. (Interview, 12.03.2008)

These attitudes and beliefs are further confirmed by the former Chairman of the Education Commission of the Bangladesh Government, who expressed his reservations about children and young people's competency to contribute to policy decisions:

> I am not sure how far children are able to express their informed situation. Stakeholders not necessarily have to include students. It would be inappropriate for children to be involved in policy decisions as children lack expert knowledge. (Interview, 09.03.2008)

While the former Chairman of the Education Commission rejected the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making in the education system, he stressed the importance of the government following suggestions made by the expert education

[10] PRSP stands for Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

commission of the country. Like the majority of the policy planners and high school teachers who participated in my study, the former Chairman of the Education Commission also held the negative view about childhood and children and young people's competency. Stressing the importance of expert knowledge in education planning, the former Chairman of the Education Commission failed to recognise children and young people's cultural knowledge for planning education policies and designing curriculum. This official thinking is in sharp contrast with the findings that children and young people in rural Bangladesh hold rich cultural knowledge that could contribute to developing a curriculum that befits this knowledge (Mariam, 2009: 224).

Similar official thinking about children and young people's social position is reflected in the education sector in Bangladesh (CAMPE, 2009). For instance, one of the recommendations of the proposed education policy was to establish an advisory group, such as the national council on primary education, to facilitate dialogue and consultation with all concerned stakeholders. The education policy papers identified the major stakeholders as being parents, NGOs, academic institutions, and other institutions of civil society (CAMPE, 2009: 8). Children and young people were not identified as stakeholders for consultation for such position papers or policy recommendations (Mariam, 2009: 229).

In Bangladesh, the social meaning of *shishu* (child) as a not knowing and not responsible subject has significant implications for children and young people's access to various rights and resources including their right to information and participation in decision-making. It is significant to note that the parliament endorsed the National Education Policy in December 2010 without having any discussion or debate in the relevant Parliamentary Committees in the Parliament (Ahmed, 2013). The Bangladesh Government approved a National Education Policy which was devoid of children and young people's perspectives. In this way, official thinking in Bangladesh excludes children and young people's opportunities to influence policy decisions that have salience for children and young people's current interests. Such exclusion points to children and young people's lack of opportunities to exercise their citizenship at present. The young people's greater lack of opportunity for participation in government decision-making was highlighted in the pie chart exercises, followed by less participation in educational institutions, followed by in the family. The four main reasons young people in my research identified for their non-participation were lack of opportunity, fear of adults due

to physical and or emotional-psychological violence, young people's lack of social skills, and adult's attitude towards children and young people's competency to participate in decision-making.

The ideal and contemporary construction of children and childhood in Bangladesh is highly associated with innocence, a lack of reason and an abstinence from work and sexual activity. This ideal construction is in sharp contrast with the reality and experiences of most disadvantaged children and young people who are: working; on the street; growing up in brothels; exposed to sexual exploitation and trafficking; orphans and placed in institutional care (Blanchet, 1996; Singh, 2003: 9).

Therefore, a disjuncture can be observed between the ideal image of childhood in the official language and the reality of actual children and young people's lives in Bangladesh. The consequence of these idealised and stereotyped images of children and young people is that they offer a distorted vision of the actual childhood experiences of a vast number of children and young people in Bangladesh. Such a mismatch between the ideal construction and reality can leave very little room for protecting and promoting children and young people's rights and recognising their competency to participate in decision-making that affects their lives, especially in public policies and services (Singh, 2003: 9).

These findings mirror those of other researchers who argue that adult attitudes and beliefs tend to significantly restrict children and young people's participation in policy decisions. For instance, in the context of Indonesia, Bessell (2009a: 305) argues that 'ideas that conceptualise children as incompetent and as subordinate to adults—and the institutions that these ideas are embedded in—militate against efforts to promote children's participation'. Similarly, in discussing the complex relationship between children's rights, decision-making and childhood in UK context, Jones and Welch (2010: 114-115) point to the complexity of ideas about childhood and how politicians draw on those ideas which are often ignored.

In regards to ideology of childhood and children and young people's opportunity to participate in decisions, age plays a further exclusionary role in children and young people's participation in decision-making. That is, the value and validity of children and young people's active participation to adult decision-makers decreases with children's

age (see also, Bessell, 2009a: 310; Shier, 2010: 32). For example, although the Children's Council represents children and young people from 6 to 17 years, only older adolescents (aged 15 to 17 and older) are predominantly represented in decision-making forums with government, NGOs and INGOs, as already highlighted in Chapter Seven. Even some of the former leaders of the Children's Council still hold various leading positions at the National Children's Parliament and at the National Children's Task Force.

As argued in the previous chapter, children and young people's participation in various decision-making forums predominantly involves not only older but also 'articulate and vocal' young people. The National Children's Parliament and the National Children's Task Force mimic adult structures and mechanisms, and therefore largely exclude younger children's needs, interests and perspectives and their direct representation in shaping policies and services. Similarly, cross-cultural studies also point to this tendency of involving older adolescents while excluding younger children's representation and perspectives from children and young people's participation initiatives (for instance, Bessell, 2009a: 310; Mason and Bolzan, 2010: 130; Shier, 2010: 32).

In this section, I have discussed official ideologies about childhood that undervalue children and young people's active citizenship. I have demonstrated that the existing child-adult power relations are further reinforced by adultist and official ideologies of childhood which view children and young people as standardised developmental trajectories, as future investment, as vulnerable and as incompetent (see also, Moore and Mitchell, 2012: 195). As a result, ideas held by policy planners often lead to children and young people's social, political and structural exclusion from influencing policies and services that affect their lives. The above discussions reveal several exclusionary processes in the existing policy space in Bangladesh that have implications for children and young people's participation in decision-making in policies and services.

First, there appears to be a gap between official ideologies about children and young people's correct place or lowly status in society, which is subordinate to adults and the policy rhetoric of the Bangladesh Government. The government recognises the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) as the representative body of children and young people and has stated a commitment in the National Plan of Action for Children (NPA), 2005–2010 that aims to ensure children and young people's participation in all children-related policy decisions, but which does not necessarily translate into practice.

Second, children and young people's systematic exclusion from policy processes results from particular attitudes of policy planners that underestimate children and young people's competency and reinforce children and young people's inferior social position. Such attitudes also reveal a lack of belief among policy planners that children and young people's participation may result in better policy outcomes that have salience for children and young people's present interests.

Third, the existing official ideologies view children and young people only as future citizens, which underestimates their present contribution and thereby their active citizenship. In this way, official ideologies of childhood undervalue children and young people's agency and role in shaping their lives and thereby ignore children and young people's present interests. Therefore, children and young people's participation efforts need to carefully take into account the cultural politics of childhood.

Fourth, structures and mechanisms need to be well developed to ensure the participation of younger children in decision-making to ensure representation of the perspectives of children and young people of different ages as well as diversified backgrounds. Finally, practical issues such as resource constraints need to be addressed so that children and young people's participation in decision-making is not lost in other competing agendas.

In the following section I discuss how the status of children and young people's citizenship is reflected in the particular constructions of childhood that underpin laws and policies for children and young people in Bangladesh and cause children and young people's exclusion from institutional structures and mechanisms in influencing policies and services.

'We have not received any order': inadequate institutional processes

Enabling legislation and adequate structures can facilitate children and young people's systematic and meaningful participation in public decision-making processes. In the context of Wales, UK, Williams (2012: 224) argues that in order to implement many provisions of the UNCRC it is necessary to have strong parliamentary and administrative mechanisms. The objective of such mechanisms is to create opportunities for participatory engagement and for the measurement of impact of the UNCRC on the lives of children and young people.

Similarly, researchers stress that specific approaches to implementing the UNCRC provisions greatly depend upon national legal systems, socioeconomic and cultural conditions and other circumstances of the state's parties (UNICEF, 2007; Osler, 2010: 21; Couzens, 2012). An analysis of the impact of the UNCRC on child-specific legislation in 52 ratified countries to the UNCRC illustrates that one significant reason for slow impact is the absence of enabling legislation and adequate structures, such as an independent body or ombudsperson, to ensure meaningful participation of children and young people in democratic processes (UNICEF, 2007).

However, unlike in the UK and Norway, where children and young people's participation in child-related policies has been made a legal imperative across all public sectors and where there has been the appointment of a children's ombudsman (DfES, 2004: 120; Percy-Smith, 2010), there is no such legal base and ombudsman for children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh.

As a result, in the absence of voting rights and constitutionalisation of children's participation in law-making (see also, Couzens, 2012), children and young people in Bangladesh are largely excluded from systematically influencing laws, policies and services to pursue their collective interests. The concluding observations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter UNCRC committee) criticises the Bangladesh Government for not fulfilling its obligation to children and young people's participation in decision-making, such as in budget planning (UNCRC, 2009). The participants in my study considered that the absence of a legal basis is one of the main reasons for the lack of children and young people's participation in collective decision-making.

Absence of legal basis and resource constraint

The majority of policy planners, local government officials, secondary school and college teachers, and some INGO staff in my study stressed that an absence of any legislation for children and young people's participation make the UNCRC unknown and unimportant to policy planners and service providers. For instance, most of the policy planners (12 out of 15 Secretaries) in my study expressed their ignorance about the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making and about the government's commitment to and obligation for producing a periodic situational report to the UNCRC

committee on the implementation of the UNCRC. The widespread ignorance of the idea of children and young people's participation in policy circles is reflected by the Education Secretary of Bangladesh Government: '…the idea of children's participation is unknown to all of us. If there was a law regarding this issue, we all would have known about it…' (Interview, 11.03.2008).

Thus, an absence of legal provision makes the idea of children and young people's participation less known and unimportant to the concerned authorities especially the policy planners, as also reflected in the following comment by the Secretary of Law of the Bangladesh Government:

> The idea of children's participation has never been a seriously felt issue. There are international conventions that the government has ratified but they are not all enforced into the state law. When the government has ratified a Convention, it becomes obligatory for the state to implement it through legal procedures. But who is going to monitor whether Bangladesh is implementing the Convention or not? There is no legal obligation to consult children in the policy process in Bangladesh. At present, children's opinions are sought through adults, their guardians and teachers. (16.03.2008)

Similarly, in stressing the importance of the legal basis of children and young people's participation, the Tangail District Officer of Bangladesh Children's Academy commented:

> Child participation cannot be ensured through NGO projects. It has to be integrated into the country's mainstream education system. It has also to be made mandatory by enacting a law so that the government and NGOs make compulsory provisions in their respective programs to consult children; whether the NGOs work for micro-finance or for education. There must be a legal binding to bring changes in adult attitudes. (Interview, 09.01.2008)

Due to the lack of a legal basis, the idea of children and young people's participation is not integrated into the government's Rules of Business in Bangladesh. The Rules of Business deal with the core responsibilities of government officials. An absence of any requirement in the Rules of Business to consult children and young people in policy planning makes children and young people's participation largely unknown to policy-makers in Bangladesh. A number of INGO representatives expressed concerns regarding such absence of a children and young people's agenda in the Rules of Business of the government as commented by the Acting Country Representative of one INGO:

> The idea of children's participation is not included in the government's Rules of Business. As a result, ensuring children's participation in policy processes is not a core duty of government officials. Thus, the government officials consider that it is an additional duty and thereby lack motivation to involve children in policy processes even when we the INGOs

> take initiative. Even, there is no government budget allocated for consulting children in policy planning. (Interview, 26.03.2008)

Thus, consulting children and young people in policy planning processes is not a rule for the policy planners in Bangladesh. This view is evident in the following statement of the Secretary of Communication of the Bangladesh Government:

> I have not received any government order to consult children in urban planning. There is no requirement to directly involve children in any of our government projects. The participation method is absolutely absent in our system because the concept is absent in our country even two or three years ago. (Interview, 12.03.2008)

Therefore, a lack of legislation making children and young people's participation mandatory in Bangladesh implies that the realisation of the idea of children and young people's participation in public policies depends on the competing interests of different governments, as one policy planner commented:

> Government must have a policy on how to make a policy that includes children as stakeholders in policy planning processes. Each government has agendas, but there should be some common agendas so that policies are not changed along with the change of the government. (Interview, Secretary, Telegraph and Telephone Board, 11.03.2008)

While facilitating children and young people's participation by law is important, there remain challenges in changing organisational culture to engage children and young people's voices in a meaningful way in Bangladesh as elsewhere. In this regard, pointing to institutions that undervalue children and young people's competence, Osler (2010: 18) argues in the context of the UK that in order to ensure children and young people's participation in decision-making, the process of developing of a legal system needs to be well-matched by cultural change where adults recognise children and young people's autonomy and competence as citizens in the present. Other researchers also believe that despite the well-developed legal arrangements, children and young people in the UK are hardly able to significantly influence decisions and service commissioning (for instance, Percy-Smith, 2010: 107-108).

Therefore, a well-defined law may not necessarily translate into practice, as commented on by the Country Director of one INGO reflecting similar concern to many other participants in my study:

> There are a number of good laws in Bangladesh, including child labour law. Are there any evidences that those laws have been implemented so far? We do not need any more laws in this country. What we need is a change in our attitude towards children and their capacity; what children can and cannot do. 12.03.2008)

The participants argued that it is not followed up whether the government has taken into account children and young people's perspectives in its policy papers or not. Also, it is not recorded whether the government is implementing any commitments made in policies. Therefore, some participants in my study raised concerns that apart from some developmental outcomes, such as new skills and knowledge for participating children and young people, such participation rarely impacts on policies and practices (Shier et al., 2014: 1).

For instance, the national budget is not segregated and is not reviewed to monitor the allocation of government funding as per programs and activities identified in government policies for children and young people. Therefore, questions have increasingly been raised about the real impact that participation has on children and young people's lives (see also, Thomas et al., 2010: 35; Thomas, 2012a: 10; Shier et al., 2014). Such a lack of commitment also points to a lack of accountability by both government and NGOs towards children and young people (Shier et al., 2014: 7).

Despite having a legal basis, another practical reason behind this lack of commitment to translate policy into practice can be explained by the shortage of resources and balancing competing agendas of the government. Especially the statements of the government, INGO and UNICEF representatives expressed such concern in my study as reflected in the following comment by the representative of UNICEF:

> The main problem is that the Government's policy documents are not supported by resources. If UNICEF has projects that require children's participation, only then the Government invites children's participation. (Interview, 27.12.2007)

Similar resource concern is also expressed in the statement of the Finance Secretary of the Bangladesh Government:

> We have more pressing needs for children such as meeting their health and education than ensuring their participation. Government has scarce resources for meeting the basic needs of its vast population. Therefore, we need to carefully consider where our scare resources will be spent. (Interview, 26.03.2008)

Therefore, the government commitment to ensure children and young people's participation which is stated in the National Plan of Action for Children is not necessarily supported by resources for implementation. In this regard, the absence of any monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Children makes it more difficult to measure the effectiveness of various institutions and their initiatives for children and young people's rights, including their participation in decision-making. Thus, there is no way to monitor whether the government is prioritising children and young people's issues, or whether the allocated amount is sufficient and the budget is efficiently utilised. Compared to other South Asian countries where the education budget is six to eight percent of GDP, it is only two percent in Bangladesh. Traditionally, a significant portion of the budget is allocated for military expenditure in Bangladesh. In the education sector, universities and cadet colleges get a higher proportion. The government's priority for military expenditure is also evident in the greater allocation of the education budget for only 12 cadet colleges (Interview, UNICEF representative, 27.12.2007).

Moreover, under the education budget, a significant portion of the budget is allocated for infrastructural purposes rather than for recruiting teachers and for the professional development of teachers (Interview, Professor, Institute for Education and Research, University of Dhaka, 03.02.2008). Such unequal distribution of resources causes structural inequalities which results in the exclusion of especially disadvantaged children and young people due to poor quality education and poverty. Thus, an absence of legal basis coupled with resource constraints and unequal distribution of resources greatly causes children and young people's exclusion from influencing policies and services that affect them in Bangladesh.

In the following section, I discuss how the absence of a legal basis and resource constraints eventually lead to inadequate structures and mechanisms that constrict children and young people's systematic participation in policies and services in Bangladesh.

Inadequate structures and mechanisms

Specific and separate structures and mechanisms such as ministries, directorates, and Children's Ombudsmen or Children's Commissioners, can facilitate systematic inclusion of children and young people's perspectives into institutional policies, planning and

services. Both the UN Child Rights Committee and researchers underscore the importance of state obligations to create adequate structures and mechanisms to enable children and young people's meaningful participation in decision-making processes (for instance, Bessell, 2009a; Thomas et al., 2010; Botlhale, 2012; Couzens, 2012). These studies show a positive impact of separate and specific structures and procedures in ensuring children and young people's participation in policies and services. In the context of the Philippines, Bessell (2009a: 301-302) demonstrates that a range of mechanisms for children and young people's systematic participation in decision-making has been instituted at all levels of government.

However, unlike in the Philippines (where children and young people's participation has been integrated into state machineries) and UK and in many European, Pacific and Latin American countries (where Children's Commissioners or Ombudsmen have been appointed), there are no specific and separate structures for children and young people's participation in Bangladesh. Due to lobbying and advocacy by civil society organisations since 2005, the National Children Policy 2011 has set one of the implementation strategies to appoint an 'Ombudsman for Children' which is yet to be established. As a result, children and young people's perspectives are routinely excluded in influencing mainstream decision-making processes in both development and public policies and services in Bangladesh.

A majority of INGO staff and government officials in my study believed that the absence of specific and separate structures and mechanisms leads to slow implementation of children and young people's participation in decision-making processes at various levels of particularly government policies and services. The two agencies that are responsible for children and young people's issues in Bangladesh are the Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) and the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs (MOWCA). The Ministry of Social Welfare is the lead agency for implementing children and young people's rights in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs is the primary agency responsible for coordinating, implementing and monitoring of the UNCRC and the National Plan of Action for Children (NPA) among different ministries and between national and sub-national level government agencies. However, children and women are treated as a single group both in its policies and programs, which is reflected in the renaming of the Ministry of Women's Affairs as the Ministry of Women's and Children's

Affairs in 1994 (Reinbold, 2014: 37-38). In this way, children and young people's issues are sidelined within competing agendas of women's issues.

Thus, due to separate structures and inadequate efforts to integrate children and young people's perspectives across state machineries, including a high turnover of ministry officials, these ministries fail to offer new policies or effective implementation of existing policies (Siddiqui, 2001: 43). Moreover, the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, the lead agency for monitoring children and young people's issues, lacks any measurable goals for achieving children and young people's rights in general, and their participation in decision-making in particular. For instance, out of eight medium-term strategic objectives of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, only two are directly related to children and young people. These are the empowerment and development of children and young people's talent through integration and absorption in society, and the reduction of social violence against underprivileged children and young people. Furthermore, there are serious limitations in these two objectives.

First, these two objectives are certainly vague, are difficult to implement due to a lack of integrated approach for children and young people's overall development and are not framed in terms of rights. Second, these objectives are limiting as they focus on conformity and are needs-based. Two significant ideas that underpin the needs-based approaches to children and young people's development are their future-orientation in childhood and that adults, especially experts, know children and young people's needs independently of individual children and young people's subjective experiences and perspectives (Bessell, 2010: 207). Third, while the first objective refers to empowering and developing children's talent only, the second objective refers exclusively to the protection of underprivileged children.

Therefore, the objectives lack an agenda for the inclusion of children and young people's perspectives in decision-making that affect all children and young people's lives in the present as well as in the future. The strategic objectives of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs thus lack measurable goals and a rights-based agenda. These objectives also lack the necessary institutional structures and mechanisms such as a separate Ministry or Directorate for Children's Affairs and an ombudsman for the effective implementation, monitoring, evaluation and coordination of activities on children and young people's issues.

Moreover, according to the operational framework of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, only the Bangladesh Children's Academy (BCA) and the Directorate of Children's Affairs (DCA) are responsible agencies for implementing the objectives of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs. However, there are inadequate structures and mechanisms to implement the operational framework. On the one hand, the Directorate of Children's Affairs is yet to be established. On the other hand, the capacity of the Bangladesh Children's Academy is limited and is only mandated to 'foster the mental and cultural faculties' of children and young people through organising cultural programs on a limited scale.

Furthermore, there is no inter-ministerial coordination strategy that the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs needs in order to accomplish its objectives. Moreover, the absence of a separate Directorate for Children's Affairs coupled with a lack of inter-ministerial coordination makes the coordinating role and position of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs weak and highly ineffective in translating the Government's commitment to children and young people's rights. The INGO and UNICEF representatives and some government officials in my study expressed concerns regarding the absence of government structures and procedures to ensure that children and young people's perspectives were considered in government decision-making processes.

The following statement by the Program Director of the Directorate of Women's Affairs of the Bangladesh Government also reflects similar frustration expressed especially by many other participants in my study:

> In the absence of a separate Directorate for children, the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs has to directly administer everything. How well does a Senior Assistant Secretary or a Joint Secretary cope with communications, networking, and monitoring? So, everything gets delayed. Thus, children's issues do not get much priority among the competing agendas of women's issues. Unlike the Department of Women's Affairs and the focal points of women's issues being integrated into 18 ministries, there is no such department or even a focal point for children within the ministries. Moreover, there are no responsible positions to deal with children's issues; children are not focus of the Directorate of Women's Affairs. The only program that the Directorate of Women's Affairs undertake regarding children are running a few day care centres in the capital city and maintaining a local level committee to combat abuse against women and children. (Interview, 04.03.2008)

Echoing the previous concern, the Secretary of Education commented:

> It is crucial to establish a separate Directorate of Children's Affairs up to the sub-district level. It is important to have a bottom-up approach to integrate children's issues in the

> government planning. Bangladesh Children's Academy is not very functional and it is yet to be converted as a Directorate as the focal Secretariat for children's affairs. An absence of a separate structure, there is no cross-ministerial coordination for children's issues. I have been in this Ministry over the last two years. I have not been invited to a single meeting by the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs regarding children's issues. (Interview, 11.03.2008)

Likewise, a majority of UNICEF and INGO representatives interviewed stressed the importance of a separate structure such as a Children's Commissioner or Ombudsman as reflected in the following statement of the Assistant Country Representative of one INGO:

> The proposal for a separate Directorate for Children's Affairs had been rejected by the government on the ground of lacking resources. The establishment of an Ombudsman for children on the other hand, has been postponed over the last few years due to change in the government. Without such structures, it is unlikely to systematically integrate children's perspectives into polices and services. (Interview, 10.03.2008)

However, in contrast to the above views, the Secretary of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs of the Bangladesh Government questioned the benefit of establishing a separate structure for children's affairs such as the Directorate of Children's Affairs as stated below:

> I do not know whether it is beneficial at all to create a separate Directorate because children's issues are cross-cutting. What extra benefit can a separate Directorate [of Children's Affairs] offer that the existing Directorate [of Women's Affairs] cannot offer? There is a National Children's Council headed by the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs where all Cabinet Secretaries oversee children's welfare. There is a Steering Committee for CRC implementation headed by the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs. The Women's and Children's Affairs has been trying to activate the existing system rather than creating a new system. For instance, we are making provisions for more female police force. More budgets are allocated for Bangladesh Children's Academy. (Interview, 12.03.2008)

Thus, the Secretary of the lead Ministry responsible for addressing children and young people's issues undervalued the ineffectiveness and limitations of the existing structures and thereby negated any possibility of establishing a separate and specific Ministry or Directorate of Children's Affairs. The above contrasting opinions point to a lack of commitment by the Government towards prioritising and implementing children and young people's rights including their participation in public decision-making.

The following statement by a representative of UNICEF also reflects the commitment issue of the Bangladesh Government towards taking children and young people's participation seriously:

> In 2002 UNICEF established focal points for 17 ministries during the preparation of the Government periodical report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, the focal points are not functioning any longer. There are no efforts by the government to maintain inter-ministerial coordination about children's issues. Once the National Plan of Action for Children was prepared, a high level committee was formed under the Chair of the Prime Minister's Personal Secretary to monitor the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Children. The first few meetings were held in which the government, NGOs and UNICEF took part. Later the Secretary gradually closed the meeting due to his business. (Interview, 26.012.2007)

Therefore, while creating a separate Directorate may facilitate children and young people's participation in decision-making, there remains a concern regarding another layer of bureaucracy. Besides, there are already criticisms regarding the effectiveness of existing structures in ensuring children and young people's participation in decision-making. Drawing on the lack of government commitment to take children and young people's participation seriously, some INGO and UNICEF representatives interviewed expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of a separate Directorate for children and young people. For instance, the Acting Country Representative of one INGO posed a challenge, 'What is the benefit of creating a separate Directorate for children? How far is the existing Directorate of Women's Affairs effective' (Interview, 10.03.2008)?

Similarly, a representative of UNICEF pointed to the tension between the government's lack of commitment and the difficulty of another layer of bureaucracy:

> The government does not seem to be serious about children's issues. Children's issues are one of many competing agendas of the government. If there is a particular desk, a focal person in each ministry can coordinate with the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs to facilitate communication, coordination and cooperation among ministries. Instead of creating another level of bureaucracy, it is easier to directly work with the focal ministry. (11.03.2008)

Therefore, there are real concerns regarding the effectiveness of the existing structures and thereby government's commitment to translate policies into practice. For instance, the idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making has been integrated into the country's mainstream policy framework such as the revised National Children Policy (2011) and the National Education Policy (2010). Moreover, the National Plan of Action for Children (NPA) 2005–2010 identifies children and young people's participation as one of the most important programming principles to decentralise budgeting processes to the local government to include both children, young people and adults (GOB, 2006).

The National Plan of Action for Children (NPA) stresses children and young people's involvement not only in defining their needs and status as beneficiaries and developing and delivering interventions but also in evaluating the effectiveness of programs. The NPA also recognises the National Children's Task Force (NCTF) as one of the stakeholders, along with government and non-government institutions to implementing, monitoring and evaluating child rights programs in all the 64 administrative districts of the country.

Nevertheless, there was no initiative by the government to implement the program during the entire five–year period of the NPA (Islam, 2012). Children and young people were not even identified as stakeholders in the planning of the National Education Policy 2010 as discussed earlier in this chapter. This lack of government commitment to translating policies into practice is evident in the statements of policy planners in my study (Interview, Minister of Education, 23.03.2008; Program Manager, INGO, 03.02.2008; UNICEF Representative, 26.02.2008). Almost all the 15 policy planners interviewed in my study admitted a lack of interest by all successive governments in translating their stated commitments into practice, reflected in the following statement by the Education Secretary of the Bangladesh Government:

> Our successive political governments do not have any intention to implement any policies in this country. They initiate policies and make grand plans only to satisfy the donors. The government does not have any ownership of any policies; all are dictated by the big, big donors. (23.03.2008)

The above examples thus point to not only the lack of government commitment to translate policy into practice, which is reflected in the absence of adequate institutional processes, but they also indicate to the broader macro structural forces of external donor influences on policies.

In this section, I have argued that there is a lack of commitment by the government to translate children and young people's participation into practice. I have demonstrated that children and young people's exclusion from influencing policies and services does not exclusively stem from the power relations of official ideologies of childhood. It is also caused by a lack of participatory mechanisms and inadequate institutional processes in the absence of legal basis, and resource constraints. I have also argued that children and young people's participation does not necessarily result in shaping policies and services and well-intended policies do not always translate into practice. In this way, power is

exercised at the macro level, resulting in children and young people's social and political exclusion through social policies. The above findings suggest some implications for children and young people's participation in public decision-making.

First, an absence of a democratic system to ensure children and young people's systematic participation in decision-making suggests a need to develop a legal system to facilitate participatory engagement and civic integration (see also, Berghman, 1995: 19). Moreover, a legal base needs to be well supported by cultural change that values and recognises children and young people's competency and role to shape decisions that affect their lives. Equally important is to address resource constraints in order to avoid prioritising competing agendas and structural influence.

Second, the contrasting views regarding separate structures and procedures dovetail with the debate around mainstreaming versus single-issue approaches in realising children and young people's rights in general and their participation in particular. The contrasting views also reveal the lack of democratisation of institutions for inclusive policy and service planning in Bangladesh (see also, Dreze and Sen, 2002; Lewis, 2011). Therefore, there is a greater need for participatory structures to ensure children and young people's systematic participation in public decision-making.

Taken together, in the following sections I discuss how the socio-political factors contribute to children and young people's exclusion from influencing education policies and democratic school experiences.

Children and young people's exclusion from influencing policies

The highly politicised nature of planning and executing culture in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2008) coupled with a lack of political identity contribute to children and young people's social and structural exclusion from influencing mainstream policies that affect their lives. Even where there are opportunities for participation such participation is based on deeply 'unequal' terms (see also, Sen, 2000: 28-29), which is also a form of social exclusion. As a result, especially government policies and programs in Bangladesh result in unfavourable outcomes and impacts on children and young people, which are manifested through the negative macro-economic indicators of child poverty, child labour and child malnutrition as they are in many other countries in the Global South (for instance, Botlhale, 2012) .

In the context of Botswana, Botlhale (2012) argues that a paternalistic budgetary system, which excludes children and young people's participation in budgetary processes, is an overarching cause of the ineffectiveness of government policies and services to bring about positive changes in children and young people's lives. Likewise, children and young people's perspectives being routinely excluded from influencing policies of various institutions of the Bangladesh Government is considered one of the major contributing factors preventing realising children and young people's needs and rights. The Secretary of Information of the Bangladesh Government commented on this exclusionary process:

> Children are not considered as political actors…the Ministry of Information deals with 12 separate Directorates and each of them has a separate policy guideline. Although the general policy guideline of the Ministry has a focus on women and children, there is no such policy specifically for children's rights or participation issues. If there was a specific policy, then the media guideline could include the agenda of children's participation. (Interview, 16.03.2008)

One sustainable way of program effectiveness is to incorporate children and young people's perspectives into planning and policy processes to address their present as well as future interests by ensuring diversified social voices. However, the absence of a policy that requires children and young people's systematic participation in influencing policies and services and a lack of children and young people's identity as politically relevant beings result in consulting children on a piece-meal basis. The INGOs and some policy planners interviewed commented on the limitation of a piece-meal approach of children and young people's participation as reflected in the following statement of the Program Manager of one INGO:

> It is beyond the capacity of a [INGO] project to motivate parents, teachers, and policy planners to consult children. The government has to make it mandatory to incorporate children's perspectives into policy processes. (Interview, 11.01.2008)

Pointing to the exclusion of children and young people's perspectives in policy and planning processes, the Tangail District Education Officer of the Bangladesh Government expressed a similar view that:

> We do not have any [government] order to involve students in the education system. We cannot do anything beyond prescribed rules. I pay visit to schools during examinations and monitor whether rules are enforced properly. But there are no such discussions or consultations with teachers or with students regarding education policies or curriculum. (Interview, 12.01.2008)

Thus, the compulsory requirement of students' participation in education planning is absent in the existing policy framework in Bangladesh as also commented by the Chairman of the National Curriculum Text Book Board of the Bangladesh Government:

> There is no policy requirement to include students in curriculum design. The Curriculum Design Ordinance identifies the experts, not the students, as stakeholders for curriculum designing. Compared to many countries, Bangladesh even does not have any school curriculum committee that consists of teachers to give feedback on the draft curriculum. Then how can we expect to include students in curriculum designing and education policies? (Interview, 06.03.2008)

Thus, children and young people in Bangladesh have hardly any opportunities to participate in decision-making regarding the national education system, which appears to be devoid of participatory philosophy. In the context of UK, researchers observe consultative exercises by policy-makers with students as piece-meal efforts, as being cosmetic and there is still great ambivalence regarding the need to ensure young people's perspectives within education (Osler, 2010: 1; McCluskey, 2014: 94, 100). Therefore, despite some important achievements, the development of education policy and strategies for school development hardly draw centrally on the perspectives of students. Nevertheless, there are examples of democratic education in some European countries such as in Denmark, where there is student representation on school boards (Osler, 2010). Also, youth participation has been reinforced by formal policies and national educational structures by European countries (Mitra et al., 2014: 292). Osler (2010: 1) points out that such effort in making students' perspectives central in educational policy-making remains the exception rather than the rule.

In the context of Bangladesh, not only children but also responsible adults such as teachers do not have any opportunities to contribute to develop the education curriculum as evident in the above statement. Even, local curriculum experts have very little role in identifying children and young people's needs or in developing context-specific education curriculums in Bangladesh as the curriculum is usually developed by donor-prescribed hired expatriate consultants.

A majority of leaders from the Children's Council, young people from two best schools in Tangail, INGOs, UNICEF, and academics in my study expressed concerns that children and young people's lack of participation in education policies, including the planning of school curriculums, goal setting and selection of curriculum content and

pedagogy, all of which result in poor educational experience, poor educational outcomes and a high dropout rate.

For instance, the pie chart exercises with young people show that the highest percentage of young people's time, on average 65 to 75 percent, was spent in attending school, private education coaching classes and doing homework. The young people in the district town spent an average of 16 hours in study purposes compared to an average of 10 hours by rural young people. The least amount of time that the young people had for recreation was about five percent of their daily time. The least amount of time for sleep was recorded as four hours for Grade X students in the district town.

The adult as well as young participants in my study also commented on the newly introduced School-based Assessment in Bangladesh which lacks children and young people's perspectives. The participants expressed concern for the possibility of this new education system to be misused and abused by teachers through failing students due to students' non-compliance (see also, Billah, 2009).

Although the newly introduced School-based Assessment could be an opportunity for initiating greater teacher-student interaction, due to a lack of teachers' training, disproportionate class sizes, limited contact hours and adult authority teachers maintain traditional rote-learning methods. One Assistant Head teacher of a secondary school commented, reflecting the frustration of many other high school teachers in my study that:

> The government has introduced the School-based Assessment without considering the viability of the education sector of the country. It may be applicable to Western countries where the teacher-student ratio is 1:20. A country with a teacher-student ratio is 1: 80 cannot replicate the same. The disaster is thus inevitable. (FGD, High School Teachers, 16.10.2007)

Not only children and young people but also concerned adults such as teachers hardly have any opportunities to influence policies. The following statement by a teacher reflected much disappointment and frustration of many other teachers in my study:

> Frankly speaking, we the teachers do not like this School-based Assessment. But we do not have any opportunity and forum to express our concerns. As being adults, we do not have any scope to express our views or to participate in the planning processes. Then how can we think even taking children's views? No, there is no opportunity for children's perspectives taken in education system. (FGD, High School Teachers, 13.01.2008).

Instead of involving diversified stakeholders in the planning processes of designing the educational curriculum, the already designed programs developed by expatriate consultants are piloted in a selected spots to formalise the validity of the program. For instance, the Chairman of the National Curriculum Text Book Board of the Bangladesh Government admitted that:

> There are ten selected spots [schools] around the capital city where we pilot our new program, whether it is new education system, curriculum or teachers training. It is cost-effective for the government to pilot new initiatives in a small scale around the capital city. Yes, you are right that it may not address wider and diversified groups but at least we do the piloting within our budget constraint. (Interview, 27.03.2008)

The above examples point to wider spatial features of structural exclusion of both children and adults concerned, even teachers, within the policy space in Bangladesh. Thus, the mismatch between the government's stated commitment to ensure children and young people's participation in decision-making and actual practice was apparent in many discussions in my study. For instance, in response to my question about the validity of the School-based Assessment education system, the former Chairman of the Education Commission expressed his frustration:

> Our government does not listen to us. We submitted an education policy by considering the country context, but the government did not follow that policy. Our government is only interested in following the prescription of donor agencies. (Interview, 09.03.2008)

Similar concerns regarding donor-driven education policy were raised by an academic:

> The need assessment and evaluation of the National Curriculum and Text Book Board [NCTB] is extremely poor because their projects are donor-driven. The NCTB do not do any research on their own. The donor-prescribed foreign consultants are appointed to design all programs including education curriculums. There are paradoxes in the donor-driven projects. Unlike in the UK and in Singapore where there is a permanent committee for education, there is no such permanent education committee in Bangladesh. As a result, there is no regular or systematic research, review and amendment done. The old education commission reports are altered here and there and are followed accordingly. (Interview, Professor, Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University, 10.03.2008)

Thus, both children and young people and concerned adults had hardly any opportunity to participate in the planning and designing of school curriculums. Moreover, since the curriculum is designed by externally hired foreign consultants, there is no room for in-house capacity development. The INGOs, UNICEF, academics and former Chairman of the Education Commission interviewed expressed concerns regarding donor dependency which resulted in lack of in-house capacity for curriculum development, poor targeting

and decontextualised education policy and curriculum reflected in the following comments, 'Neither the Ministry nor the NCTB staff are qualified enough to develop curriculum…there is no initiative to develop in-house expertise…. ' (UNICEF representative, Interview, 26.12.2007). Similarly, 'non-professional people are holding professional government positions. The people who are responsible for curriculum development board are neither qualified nor expert in that area' (Interview, Professor, Institute for Education and Research, Dhaka University, 19.03.2008).

The former Chairman of the Education Commission of the Bangladesh Government also expressed concern regarding the competency of the concerned authority that:

> The people in the Ministry have very general background. None of them have any specialisation on education. As soon as they get a new idea from a donor, they tend to try it out. If you look at the education sector, amongst the civil administration people, the civil administrative bureaucrats are holding the positions. At the National Curriculum Text Board, positions are held from the college section. They are non-expert people, the non-professionals. You cannot expect professional services and decisions from non-professionals. (Interview, 20.03.2008)

As a result, the philosophy of children and young people's participation in influencing policy processes does not permeate through the education system in Bangladesh. Therefore, the exclusion of children and young people's perspectives from education planning reveals the top-down relationship between macro-level power and the curriculum and education system. The findings also point to the country's heavily reliance on external actors in designing policies and services in Bangladesh. According to the policy network literature, the most powerful actors determine the rules of any decisions or actions (see also, Tisdall and Davis, 2004: 141). In the context of Bangladesh, the government actors influenced by external donors tend to hold the decisive power.

Similarly, drawing on a 'hard power' approach, traditional curriculum theorists argue that powerful societal groups shape curriculum for their own interests based on macro-level technological, economic, political and cultural forces (Ye, 2012: 12-13). In line with such studies on power and curriculum, my findings suggest that curriculum and education policies in Bangladesh are greatly shaped by the hierarchical stratification of individuals in Bangladesh and therefore are decontextualised. The power of the government to define educational needs and requirements resulting in the decontextualised curriculum is expressed by a young person that:

> There are syllabuses and topics that do not have any association with our practical life experiences. Curriculum designers must incorporate children's perspectives into curriculum designing. The older children can easily contribute to content and pedagogy selection for subjects and classes they have already graduated. (Sohid, aged 16, FGD, Tangail District Children's Council leaders, 01.01.2008)

Likewise, a group of Mandy ethnic minority young people expressed frustrations that the history and information about their ethnic community is distorted in the school text book. The young people stressed the importance of children and young people's involvement in content selection:

> According to the school text, the Mandy people eat snakes, frogs, and wear a very short piece of cloth just to cover their genital area. It is true that only a few older generation wear that kind of short clothing but no longer the new generation. Besides, not all of us have that eating habit. If they need to write about us, they need to live with us; to experience how we lead our lives. In fact, depicting us as this, they— the majority Bengali people— want to maintain their dominance over us. (Shukher, boy, aged 16, FGD, 07.09.2007)

Thus, power inequality is a major concern especially in educational curriculum decision-making in Bangladesh. Studies elsewhere also note the diversities caused by power imbalances in curriculum decision-making (Ye, 2012: 12). However, as in the Western and especially the American education system (Thomas, 2012b: 161), students as well as teachers in Bangladesh do not have any control over the education system. In this connection, researchers comment on the influence of neoliberalism on school and education policies that negate democratic experiences and student agency in the processes (Robins, 2008: 8; Dale and Hyslop-Margison, 2010: xi; Hyslop-Margison and Savarese, 2012).

In the context of Bangladesh, there have been criticisms regarding the political nature of the education reform process (for instance, Lewis, 2011: 193) that lacks civic engagement including children and young people's perspectives. For instance, in June 2010, the government introduced the National Education Policy that aims to bring all students in Bangladesh under a single unified system including general, *madrasha* (Islamic religious educational institution), and vocational education. Widespread concern has been mounted by the civil society in Bangladesh towards this unified education system that may go against the interests of the vast numbers of poor children and young people who may be unable to pursue this common education due to their structural conditions. Critics point to the instrumental role of donors in promoting development policies including education policies in Bangladesh which is decontextualised.

An analysis of the above examples indicates two major flaws in policy processes in Bangladesh: first that the policy processes lack a participatory structure to ensure democratic engagement, and second, the role and influence of external donors in shaping public and development policies in Bangladesh.

As in the government sector, children and young people's perspectives are also routinely excluded in influencing planning and implementing processes of the development sector in Bangladesh. Despite some impressive achievements, the development sector, working on promoting child development and child rights in Bangladesh, lacks any specific policy that requires mandatory children and young people's participation in program policies and services.

The key actors working in child development and rights in Bangladesh are Save the Children (SC) Alliance members including Save the Children-Australia; Save the Children-UK; Save the Children-USA; and Save the Children-Sweden-Denmark, UNICEF and Plan Bangladesh. Out of these six key organisations, none is reported to have a policy to ensure mandatory children and young people's participation in program policies. Both INGOs and UNICEF representatives raised concerns that due to the absence of policy on mandatory child participation, children and young people's perspectives in organisational and program decisions are included only on a piece-meal basis. For instance, the Program Officer of one INGO commented, reflecting the similar opinion of representatives of other INGOs and UNICEF that:

> In the absence of a clear organisational policy, the commitment to children's participation very much depends on the will of the head of the organisation. If the head of the organisation has interests in and expertise in child participation, then child participation is integrated across the organisation. (Interview, 27.12.2007)

Similarly, the importance of organisational policy on children and young people's participation is reflected in the following statement by the representative of UNICEF:

> As a principle, there is no policy as such to compulsorily integrate child participation in UNICEF projects. All the UNICEF projects include media campaign, but they do not necessarily promote the idea of children's participation. UNICEF follows the UNCRC principles as an overarching framework but does not have any specific policy to ensure children's systematic participation. Moreover, there is no requirement in the Program Development Framework of UNICEF to ensure children's participation. Does this mean that we do not work for children? We work for children's rights and there are some initiatives where children participate in the program activities. (Interview, 27.12.2007)

Thus, the absence of specific policy makes it less imperative for the organisation to integrate children and young people's participation in decisions across the organisation and programs. As a result, initiatives and levels of children and young people's participation vary across and between organisations based on organisational objectives, donor conditionality, and interests and the expertise of leadership as also evident in the following comment by an INGO Program Officer:

> Our country strategy paper is based on the global strategy paper. Neither of these strategy papers is based on consultation with children. In fact, we share the global strategy at country level. None of our organisational program objectives are based on children's perspectives. Instead of considering what children want, we first need to consider what is identified in the global and country strategy papers in designing projects. (Interview, 27.12.2007)

Therefore, in the absence of a legal basis for and policy on children and young people's mandatory participation in decision-making limits children and young people's opportunities to contribute to both government and development agencies in Bangladesh. While the implementation of a policy depends on the sociocultural and politicoeconomic factors of a country, a legal basis has two specific advantages over its non-legal status. First, a legal basis can facilitate the accountability mechanism of concerned agencies to ensure children and young people's participation in policies, planning and services. Second, a legal basis has the potential to raise children and young people's status and position in a society marked by uneven child-adult social relations. Taken together, the following section discusses the process of children and young people's experiences of exclusion from democratic education in Bangladesh.

Children and young people's exclusion from democratic education

Children and young people's relationship with the state is marked by children and young people's exclusion from influencing major services such as education. The core of children and young people's exclusion from influencing service decisions lies in the two intertwining factors of children and young people's lack of social status as political beings due to their lesser maturity, dependency and perceived incompetency and the power of macro structures (see also, Morris et al., 2009: 11; Bessell, 2011a: 567-568; Quennerstedt, 2011: 671; Moore and Mitchell, 2012: 195). Researchers observe that with few exceptions, most of the educational program is aimed at preparing children and young people as future adults, citizens and workers (for instance, Davis and Hill, 2006: 12; Prout and Tisdall, 2006: 240). Such future-oriented educational aims undervalue children and

young people's present interests, thereby excluding children and young people from experiencing critical citizenship in the form of democratic practice.

In Bangladesh, one of the aims and objectives of primary and secondary education listed in the Bangladesh teachers' training curriculum is to develop children as good citizens in the future. Likewise, developing children as a productive labour force is another main objective for secondary education in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2008: 4-5). As a result, although public education in Bangladesh has adopted the philosophy of inclusive education which includes participatory teaching and learning (Hossain, 2010a: 73-77), the ideals are far from translated into practice. Neither students nor teachers from six secondary schools, two colleges and one *madrasha* in Tangail participated in my study reported to have been involved in inclusive education practice.

The data indicate that structural issues such as large class size, limited class time, teachers' lack of skills, lack of infrastructural facilities, lack of educational materials and resources and low salary structure for teachers are some of the practical challenges that prevent teachers from practicing democratic education in schools. Moreover, authoritarian Bangladeshi culture that undervalues children and young people's current citizenship greatly contributes to authoritarian pedagogical practices in schools as reflected in the following statement of a secondary school teacher:

> It is the responsibility of teachers to educate children. How do they know in advance what they need to know? Besides, if children are involved in every decisions in the school then there will not be any distinction between teachers and students, children will be out of control of teachers. The newly introduced School-based Assessment system is good in one sense that students must have to fear us, conform to our authority to get marks. (FGD, female teachers, 13.12.2007)

As a result, children and young people in Bangladesh are largely excluded from school-based democracy practice such as being included in educational decision-making. This finding corresponds with other studies elsewhere that despite incorporating the rights concept in the curriculum, the traditional educational practices are largely premised on hierarchal power structures which accord exclusive power to adults to control time, space, bodies and activities of students (for instance, Quennerstedt, 2011: 669). In this hierarchal learning relationship, children are viewed as passive learners. The dominant tradition and culture of education is therefore to construct the child as subordinate and passive and thereby to reproduce hierarchical social relationships.

Therefore, while material poverty excludes many children and young people from education in Bangladesh, the power teachers and schools exert over students is premised on other inequalities (see also, Thomas, 2012b) that causes children and young people's social and political exclusion from influencing educational policies and services as reflected in the following statement by an academic:

> The idea and philosophy of children's voice is not part of the broader culture in Bangladesh. Although the government has incorporated the child rights and participation agenda in the broader policy framework, there is a lack of commitment to implement this. As a result, although there is impressive success in terms of school enrolment in primary education in Bangladesh, the equality and experience of students in democratic practices are largely absent. Such education cannot help children develop critical citizenship in the here and now. (Interview, Professor, Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University, 10.01.2008)

Other studies also point to this lack of democratic practice and inclusive politics in Bangladesh. For instance, despite significant achievement in terms of enrolment in primary education in Bangladesh, the quality of primary education remains very poor. Moreover, almost 50 percent of primary level students drop out before they reach Class Five and 40 percent of secondary level students drop out of school before they reach Class Ten in Bangladesh (GOB, 2010d: 7; BRAC, 2013: 47). This scenario points to the importance of ensuring participatory mechanisms in the education sector in Bangladesh. Other researchers (for instance, Lewis, 2011: 198) underscore the need to revive democratic institutions in Bangladesh including educational institutions in order to develop a more inclusive politics.

The above observations are reflected in the experiences of students as stated in the following comment by a secondary school student (Anu, girl, aged 15) in my study:

> We do not have any opportunities to ask questions or get clarifications in the classroom even if we do not understand something. There is no system to engage in dialogue with our teachers. Teachers expect us to listen to what they say and to take private tuition from them for further support to get good marks. That is why, we do not develop critical thinking but memorise everything and produce accordingly in the examination to get good results. This is the main reason why we do not succeed in the competitive examinations for higher education. We do not have any access to our school library. We never seen the school library is opened, it is locked round the year. We, the science students, need to use the library and laboratory. While the library is never opened, the laboratory is only opened during examinations. Most of the schools even do not have any library or laboratory. If we raise any concerns regarding our education then we are caned. Our teachers are too busy in their private tuition business; they do not have time and energy to think about students at schools. (FGD, BB Girls' High School, 03.01.2008)

The above examples point to a number of key issues in relation to children and young people's participation in education. First, the power of classroom pedagogy does not

support critical thinking and democratic practice in schools in Bangladesh. Therefore, this kind of education system can best be viewed as offering a 'prescriptive classroom' which lacks student perspectives (Freire, 1998). Drawing on Freire's (1998) critical pedagogy, in the context of the UK, Thomas (2012b: 159) critiques the prescriptive classroom as being driven by demonstrated disrespect for students in general and marginalised students in particular.

Thomas argues that a classroom of disrespect is created by excluding students in determining the content and pedagogy of learning. In addressing the issues of power of teachers and schools over students, Thomas stresses the importance of addressing cultural norms and societal realities as powerful influences in the classroom. In this regard, Freire (1998: 118) warns us to be vigilant against reproducing the dominant ideologies in the classroom and thereby underscores the broader social forces at work in education.

According to Freire (1970: 16; 1998: 110), education can serve two functions: first, as an instrument to socialise younger generations within the present system to reproduce the dominant ideology or, second, as the practice of freedom, as the means to enable students to critically and creatively engage in the process of transformation of society. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1998: 49) thus considers that the core of teaching is the ability of teachers to create possibilities for constructing and producing knowledge rather than simply engaging in transferring knowledge. Drawing on Freire, Thomas (2012b: 157) argues that a critical classroom establishes the necessary conditions for critical citizenship. However, the experiences of young people and the opinions of adults in my study indicate that such critical pedagogy is largely absent in the education system in Bangladesh, which excludes children and young people from democratic education practices.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have demonstrated that there is a lack of commitment by both government and development agencies to take children and young people's participation in respective organisational policies and services seriously. Therefore, children and young people's experiences of social and structural exclusion from influencing policies and services operate at both macro and micro levels through social policies, through lack of structures and mechanisms and through bureaucratic procedures and practices that regulate children and young people's entitlements (see also, Morris et al., 2009: 10-11).

I have demonstrated that children and young people's exclusion from policies and services results from official and unofficial ideologies of childhood embedded in social attitudes and beliefs regarding children and young people's capabilities, moral status and legal entitlements (see also, Davis and Hill: 2006: 10), and highly politicised nature of planning and executing culture in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2008). I have argued that inequality based on children and young people's lack of political identity as politically relevant actors and the power of macro structures including influences of external donors upon public and development policies require an examination of the political culture of Bangladesh that results in children and young people's social and political exclusion and denies their active citizenship.

I have also shown how ideas have profound influence on policies. The cultural politics of childhood which is manifested through attitudes and beliefs held by policy planners about children and young people's competence accord children and young people a subordinate social position and thereby negates their opportunity to shape policies and services. In this way, children and young people experience social, political and structural exclusion from influencing decisions in public and development policies and services that affect their lives.

Moreover, the normative and ideological views of childhood underpin the country's legal basis and shape institutional structures and mechanisms that are often inadequate to support children and young people's opportunities to influence policies and services. Specifically, I have argued that an absence of participatory decision-making structures for civic engagement means children and young people's participation in decision-making occurs on a piece-meal basis, especially in public policies in Bangladesh.

The above findings suggest several implications for children and young people's participation in decision-making in public spaces. First, the idea of childhood is culturally constructed and therefore contextual. The cultural meanings of childhood are premised on societal understandings of power, authority, and citizenship (Kulynych, 2001: 245). The ideas of childhood held by policy-makers and service providers in Bangladesh constrain children and young people's agency and actions and thereby deny their status as citizens to participate in democratic practice (see also, James, 2011: 167-168).

Advancing children and young people's participation in decision-making therefore greatly depends on the broader recognition of children and young people as politically relevant beings. It is important to change societal attitudes towards children and young people's social and moral status to address children and young people's social and political marginalisation (Bacon and Frankel, 2014). Such a scheme requires revised understanding of children and young people's citizenship as a political identity and a socio-political practice rather than citizenship as legal and constitutional rights, which directly challenges the issue of power in child-adult social relations (Wall, 2011: 92).

Therefore, understanding the cultural politics of childhood is crucial in understanding the ways in which children and young people's status as citizens unfolds in a society like Bangladesh which shapes children and young people's experiences of participation in policy decisions and service provisions (see also, James, 2011: 177).

Second, it is important to create structures and mechanisms as well as to strengthen existing democratic institutions to translate the democratic ideals of children and young people's participation in decision-making into practice. In order to ensure children and young people's meaningful participation in influencing policies and services, it is necessary to develop a legal system. However, the process of developing a legal system must be well matched by cultural change where children and young people's competence and contribution are recognised as fellow citizens (see also, Osler, 2010: 18).

Third, equally important is to consider, analyse and address the issues of structural factors such as resource constraints and the highly politicised nature of planning and executing culture in Bangladesh. A well-intentioned legal system and efforts to bring about cultural change towards childhood can only be meaningful in the context of addressing the intertwining impacts of resource constraints and national as well as international politicoeconomic influences upon public and development policies.

Finally, on the one hand, it is crucial to examine the policy advisory systems (Maloney et al., 1994; Craft and Howlett, 2012) in Bangladesh to evaluate how far and to what extent children and young people's perspectives actually have shaped the content of policies. On the other hand, it is vital to systematically monitor and evaluate the outcome and impact of any policy commitments for children and young people. In order to strengthen the participatory mechanisms of the government and development sector to ensure

children and young people's influence on policies and services, both government and civil society organisations need to strengthen their respective competency base and partnership. To this effect, both government and development agencies need to strengthen their accountability mechanisms downward— towards children and young people. These insights lead me to conclude this thesis.

Chapter 9 Conclusions: processes and structures shaping children and young people's participation in decision-making

In this thesis I have explored various sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes of children and young people's personal and systemic exclusion from influencing decision-making that affects their lives in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. I have argued that the impacts of power of various structures and micro and macro forces cause children and young people's powerlessness and thereby voicelessness. My findings have questioned the liberal notion of an individualised conception of children and young people's participation and the privileging of agency, which undervalues the significance of children and young people's embeddedness in various social and political relations.

In line with emerging childhood scholarship, I contend that children and young people's rights to participation in decision-making are interwoven with the experiences of other members within a family and society, and with the macro processes that shape policies and services. This insight underscores the importance of understanding of the cultural politics of childhood and considering children and young people's sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts in child participation theories, policies and practices. In advancing this argument I have examined children and young people's relationships with their families, society and the state to reveal the location of power. That is, who decides for whom, whose values count, and the values that underpin decisions (see also, Bessell, 2011c: 1) and thereby children and young people's experiences of multiple exclusion (Redmond, 2009) from influencing decisions that affect their lives.

By investigating children and young people's networks at community and at the national level that provide bonding and bridging social capital, I have also examined the processes of participatory engagement that develop children and young people's critical consciousness of the political and facilitate their perspectives to reach the local and national policy-making bodies.

In the following sections, I draw four key conclusions based on my two core arguments. The first core argument is that children and young people are subject to structural and

broader forces of power, and that their interdependent relationships with their social worlds results in their social, political and structural exclusion from decision-making in varied relational contexts. I demonstrate children and young people's vital role in engaging with core social values and that they thereby contribute to reproducing oppressive structures that shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in private and public spaces. I also demonstrate that children and young people's engagement with and contribution to various social structures and social relations implies their active citizenship.

The second core argument is that creating bonding and bridging social capital through children and young people's networks has the potential to empower and develop children and young people's critical consciousness to accessing the power structures that shape policies and services. I conclude this chapter by drawing out some implications of my findings for theoretical debates, policies and development practices in relation to children and young people's participation in private and public decision-making, especially in the Majority World contexts.

Key conclusions

In order to investigate children and young people's participation in decision-making in private and public spaces, I explored various sociocultural and politicoeconomic contexts in which children and young people live in Bangladesh. By investigating the country's socioeconomic development and political commitment to implement children and young people's participation into practice, I explored and analysed the assumptions, values and beliefs about the construction of childhood in Bangladesh.

An understanding of how childhood is conceptualised in Bangladesh is crucial to understanding various processes and structures that either enable or constrain children and young people's participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces. This insight laid the foundation for my subsequent examination and analysis of children and young people's relationships with their families, society and the state. It also enabled me to identify how interdependencies between children and young people's individual and social processes shape their experiences of participation in individual as well as collective decision-making.

Before I draw out the key conclusions regarding constraining factors, I revisit case studies of children and young people's networks that provide bonding and bridging social capital as an example of the processes of participatory engagement that facilitate children and young people's participation in decision-making, especially in public spaces.

Bonding and bridging social capital: children and young people's networks as spaces for participatory engagement

I analysed three case studies in this thesis, the Children's Council, the National Children's Task Force to monitor the implementation of the National Plans of Action for Children and the National Children's Parliament. Each of these entities creates opportunities for children and young people's participation in decision-making based on children and young people's everyday practices and life experiences. By creating bonding and bridging social capital, these networks offer necessary structures for children and young people's participatory engagement, especially in public decision-making processes.

The strengths of these networks lie in their characteristics of bottom-up representation of children and young people's participation in decision-making. These networks therefore serve as inclusive and bottom-up participatory engagement mechanisms to ensure children and young people's diversified experiences and perspectives in policy processes. In this way, these children and young people's networks serve as both representational as well as promotional groups in linking children and young people's perspectives to the micro- and macro-level power structures of decision-making in Bangladesh.

One major characteristic of these networks is that they serve as spaces for developing children and young people's political consciousness through building their critical perspectives. Therefore, training in various human development areas including life skills, child rights, journalism, protective behaviour, democratic values and management of the Children's Council is integral to the educational and empowerment agendas of these networks. Through peer education, these networks scale up the educational and empowerment agendas to ensure inclusive participation of children and young people from diverse backgrounds. Equally important is the role of adults in these networks in scaffolding and acting as a sounding board in the multi-faceted participatory processes including capacity building and policy advocacy at the level of the highest policy-making body of the country.

Values of generational interdependence in family relationships

Children and young people are embedded in interdependent family relations. This familial interdependency is played out through intergenerational social contracts in which children, young people and adults value their respective roles and responsibilities. This relational influence constrains children and young people's participation in personal decision-making. There are a number of distinct features in these interdependent familial relations that impact on children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate and the actual choices they make regarding participation in decision-making.

First, the context of a risky and dangerous society poses real vulnerability for children and young people that limits their agency. In this context, both children, young people and adults have hardly any choice that can facilitate children and young people's participation in decisions. In the context of such external vulnerability, the generational and positional power of parents appears to be positive to protect children and young people's interests.

Second, in the absence of a welfare society, the parental goal of child socialisation develops children and young people's relational self or interdependent identity which conforms to social norms and values of obedience and reciprocity. Children and young people's conformity to social norms of reciprocity and obedience ensures material and non-material security in parent-child relationships and discourages children and young people from being autonomous and perusing personal goals.

Third, the role of broader processes of modernity, such as the neoliberal education policy of compulsory school attendance, result and future-oriented education; structural adjustment policies that privatised basic services, deepened poverty, increased child labour, and the inflation of dowry demand in marriage practice, have profound impacts on children and young people's agency and opportunities to influence personal decision-making over areas such as education, career choice, marriage, recreation, use of time and social life.

Fourth, structures—such as generation, gender, class, age, geographic location, parental education and occupation status, caste, ethnicity, and social identities—intersect with each other and reproduce structures that differently constrain girls' and boys' agency and opportunities to influence personal decision-making.

Finally, children and young people's adherence to acting morally through their engagement with key social values of duty, obligation, reciprocity, deference to adult authority and maintaining honour and avoiding shame embodied through the actual choices they make regarding their participation greatly shapes children and young people's experiences of participation in personal decision-making.

Children and young people embedded in powerful relational contexts in society

Children and young people are embedded in networks of interdependent relations with various intergenerational and intra-generational social positions which shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces. An analysis of practices of child-adult and child-child interactions suggest that children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making are constrained by their lack of control over various material and non-material resources, resulting in their relative powerlessness within various social relations.

Mostly, children and young people experience personal power due to their relative dependence relationships with parents, teachers, care givers, service providers, employers and policy planners. Children and young people experience material power in its symbolic form through norms, rules, official and unofficial ideologies, conventions, allocation of resources and responsibilities within various institutions. Children and young people's experiences of material power intersects with various structures of society that cause social and political marginalisation and structural exclusion of children and young people in general and certain groups of children and young people in particular, from their participation in both individual and collective decision-making.

My data also suggest that relationships have value for children and young people that are manifested through their embodied practices of compliance to social norms of duty, reciprocity, obedience and deference to adult control and authority. Relations and networks in which children and young people are embedded generate norms, duty, trust and empathy that influence their behaviour. Children and young people's interactions with adults and with peers point to a number of dimensions evident in various child-adult and child-child social positions prevalent in Bangladesh in general and in Tangail in particular.

Drawing on conventions, rules and past experiences, children and young people often make strategic choices of conforming to social norms and values to act morally by practicing reciprocity and deference to adults to secure various material and non-material needs. These choices limit children and young people's agency and constrain their opportunities to pursue personal desires. Therefore, child-adult and child-child interactions reveal dimensions of social relations such as affective, symbolic and power-exchange that effectively shape children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh.

The views of adults and the experiences of young people in my study point to the influence of relationships upon intergenerational and intra-generational interactions. Analysing various sociocultural and politicoeconomic processes confirm the significance of contextualising children and young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making and the actual choices they make regarding their participation in making decisions. This understanding necessitates examining how opportunities are shaped and how actual choices that children and young people make are embedded in various generational relationships.

Apart from the influences of generational relations, structures such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, caste, social and birth identity, geographic location, parental education and employment status, social skills, physical attributes and different abilities also play crucial roles in creating power imbalances in child-adult and child-child social relations.

The above insights point to the power and relational dynamics evident in various intergenerational and intra-generational social positions that ultimately shape the agency and opportunities for children and young people's participation in decision-making in both private and public spaces in Bangladesh. The implications of these findings for theories, policies and practices in relation to children and young people's participation in decision-making are therefore profound.

Children and young people's social, political and structural exclusion from the state

Although children and young people's participation in decision-making has gained prominence in policy rhetoric, it has been less evident in practice in Bangladesh. While children and young people's participation in decision-making is practiced to some extent

among development agencies, it is an exception rather than the norm in government institutions. Two major institutional processes play critical roles in excluding children and young people from influencing policies and services in Bangladesh.

First, official and unofficial ideologies about childhood view children and young people as developing, as incompetent, and as future citizens. Such a deficient view of childhood results in children and young people's structural exclusion from influencing policies and services. Thus normative and ideological views of childhood marginalise children and young people as 'a basic sector' or stakeholders unable to influence policies and services. In this process, age plays a further exclusionary role by creating some opportunities only for older children (mostly 15–17 years and older) in the decision-making structures predominantly managed by development agencies.

Second, inadequate institutional processes both in government and the development sector in the absence of enabling legislation and inadequate structures such as an ombudsperson or independent department or ministry, systematically excludes children and young people from influencing policies and service decision-making.

Finally, the power of structural factors and macro forces such as the neoliberal education policy agenda in shaping children and young people's experiences of democratic education further points to the role and influence of external actors upon public and development policies that result in children and young people's systemic exclusion from influencing policies and services that affect their lives in Bangladesh.

Implications for children and young people's participation in decision-making

The findings of this thesis question the framing of children and young people's participation in decision-making through the liberal conception of the individual rights-bearing child enshrined in the UNCRC. These findings are in line with researchers who have paid increasing attention to the significance of ideas, values and beliefs (for instance, Bessell, 2011a: 567), and argue for the significant and positive impact of participation in children and young people's lives (Imoh and Ansell, 2014; Westwood et al., 2014). As has been argued throughout this thesis, children and young people are embedded in relational contexts. This insight underscores repositioning children and young people's participation in decision-making within the complex social and political relationships

with their families, society and the state. This study offers strong empirical evidence to reinforce that children and young people's right to participate in decision-making in both private and public spaces is relational.

Thus, this thesis advances the recent theoretical debates that reconceptualise children and young people's participation in terms of their social as well as political relations (for instance, White, 2002a; Burman and Stacey, 2010; Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010; Thomas, 2012a; Skelton, 2013). It advocates for recognising children and young people's active citizenship by valuing their contribution to social relations and by acknowledging them as politically relevant beings through the difference-centred notion of citizenship.

In terms of policy implications, this study points to limitations of the political and development frameworks of Bangladesh that offer rhetorical commitment to children and young people's participation in decision-making while compartmentalising the very idea of participation from children and young people's survival, development and protection. The findings of this thesis suggest that the agenda of children and young people's participation in decision-making is not integral to policies and practices of government or to the development agencies active in child rights programs in Bangladesh. As a result, children and young people's participation in decision-making is tackled on a piece-meal basis.

The idea of children and young people's participation in decision-making has been incorporated into a number of policy documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2005, the National Plans of Action for Children 2005–2010, the National Education Policy 2010, the National Children Policy 2011 and the Children Act 2013. However, there is no specific budget allocation to implement these policies (Finance Secretary, Government of Bangladesh, Interview, 26.03.2008; Acting Country Representative, INGO, Interview, 26.03.2008; UNICEF Representative, Interview, 27.12.2007).

Moreover, in the absence of segregation in the national budget, it is impossible to identify whether the government has allocated any funds at all to implement the stated commitments or whether the allocated funds are sufficient to achieve the targets. These findings provide a strong basis for strengthening democratic institutions and for creating systems and practices for participatory engagement in decision-making and accountability mechanisms of both development agencies and government. This is

because enacting legislation may not be sufficient in a context such as in Bangladesh where even adult participation in decision-making is not a norm and where decision-making is more a matter of bureaucratic process than of citizen engagement.

It is equally important to review and analyse the political influence of external actors upon public and development policies such as education reform and privatisation of basic services as they significantly impact on children and young people's lives. The findings of this thesis point to the influence of moral economy on familial relationships and how it intersects with the influences of international and national political economy upon public and development policies in creating multiple and overlapping exclusion of children and young people from influencing decision-making in both private and public spaces.

The analyses also point to the importance of recognising and addressing children and young people's vulnerability to the external environment posed by police and political corruption and overall poor governance of the country. Finally, the findings underscore the significance of policies aimed at building economic growth to address various inequalities caused by economic as well as sociocultural underdevelopment resulting in children and young people's systemic exclusion from decision-making in various relational contexts.

In relation to implications for practices, this study offers a number of suggestions. First, both rights and relationships are important in conceptualising and realising children and young people's participation in decision-making. A rights perspective is important at the institutional and at the macro level to hold the main duty bearers such as the government accountable to materialise children and young people's social and economic rights. At the micro level, a relational perspective is more useful considering children and young people's embeddedness in social and political relationships imbued with power, social structures and politics.

Second, children and young people's survival and development oriented programs need to be given priority along with advocacy oriented programs in development agencies to enable children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Third, along with promoting education and empowerment for children and young people, development agencies need to educate and empower the adult community through public education to bring about changes in attitudes, beliefs and values that create inequality based on various social identities. Understanding the cultural politics of childhood is thus significant in advancing children and young people's participation in decision-making. It is equally important to educate the donor community to contextualise public and development policies, programs and services and ensure mandatory children and young people's participation in policies and practices.

Fourth, the government in particular needs to create structures and mechanisms for participatory decision-making. Fifth, moving beyond rhetorical commitment to policies, the government must allocate budgets for translating policies and commitments into concrete practice. Finally, both government and development agencies need to strengthen their respective monitoring and accountability mechanisms toward their primary stakeholders, children and young people.

Briefly, this thesis has argued that the power created through relational dynamics limits children and young people's agency and constrains their opportunities to participate in decision-making in private and public spaces in Bangladesh. It has demonstrated that children and young people are embedded in structural relationships that produce and reproduce systematic differences in children and young people's differential positions in society.

At the micro level, within these structural relationships, children and young people are engaged with the key processes of morality or moral values that are dominant in the particular culture and context in which they live and thereby contribute to reproducing oppressive structures. Within the space of family, child-adult interactions and relations are also greatly shaped by parental concerns for children and young people's protection, especially within a context of a risky and dangerous society. Thus, positive and benevolent power infuses in familial relationships limiting the agency and opportunities for children and young people's participation in personal decision-making. The power and relational dynamics present in children and young people's interactions with adults and with other children and young people at societal level reveal both social and political dimensions within various relational contexts.

At the macro level, children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making are greatly shaped by political ideologies about childhood, the absence of adequate institutional processes for participatory and inclusive decision-making, and the dominant influence of macro structures and external actors upon public and development policies and services. This thesis thus underscores the influence of various structures, micro and macro forces that limit children and young people's agency and opportunities to participate in decision-making in both private and public spaces and the actual choices they make in relation to their participation in personal and collective decision-making.

Understanding the contexts is therefore vital in enabling children and young people's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh. Two particular processes are significant for understanding various exclusionary forces that shape children and young people's participation in both private and public decision-making: the role of moral economy in the absence of a welfare society and the role of political economy. This condition is further complicated by a socio-political context of police and political corruption and the poor law and order situation that poses a dangerous society.

By way of answering the research question, this thesis has rigorously analysed and interacted with the role of moral economy as one of the vital structuring factors of generational relationships, which contributes to shaping children and young people's experiences of participation in decision-making.

In this thesis I have also pointed to the intersection of moral economy with political economy in creating multiple exclusion of children and young people from personal and public decision-making, including influencing development and public policies and services. The present research, therefore, offers a future agenda for investigating the impact of political economy on development outcomes of children and young people and the role of civil society in governance issues including gender and educational governance in Bangladesh.

Annex 1 Interview guide for children and young people

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
1. What is the existing concept/idea/definition of childhood in Bangladesh?	1. What do you mean by a child?	1. Up to what age is a child considered a child?	In-depth interview; FGD; Worksheet; Drawings.	Local construction of child and childhood; Determinants of the specific construction of childhood: Identification of various criteria such as: age, generation, physical, social, cognitive, emotional to determine childhood; Physical growth; Social responsibility; Getting married; Giving birth to a child Started working; Earning income/money; Monetarily contributing to family.
		2. Other than age what are the other factors that determine a child? **Or** Other than age what makes you/people think that he/she is a child?		
	2. When is a child no longer considered a child?	1. What are the other factors that determine no longer being a child? **Or** Other than age what makes you/people think that he/she is no longer a child?		
	3. In this regard, is there any difference between boys and girls?	1. When is a boy no longer considered to be a child?		Gender issues framing determination of childhood.

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
		2. When is a girl no longer considered to be a child?		
2. What sorts of decisions are made about children?	1. What are the various institutions/sectors where decisions are made about you?	1. Could you name the various institutions/sectors where adults consider about your well-being and make decisions about you?	FGD; Charts	Types of decisions that are made about children in various institutions.
	2. What types of decisions are made about you in each of these institutions?	2. What types of decisions are made about you in each of the institutions that you have mentioned?		
3. Who usually make decisions about children?	1. Who usually make these decisions about you?		Charts	Key decision-makers in children's lives; Key actors who control and exercise power over children's lives.
	2. Who benefits from the existing decision-making processes about children?			Identification of the actors or sectors where power lies, who determines and sets priorities, and whose interests are served.
	3. What are those benefits?			

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
4. How decisions are made about children in each institution?	1. Could you describe the ways decisions are made about you at: home, school, child council, NGO, and national level and other sectors that you have mentioned?		FGD; Semi-structured interview; Peer Conversation	Institution-based decision-making processes, standards, norms, values and practices; Representation and authenticity of children's participation; Identifications of decision-makers and power holders in children's lives; Stages or level of children's participation.
	2. When allowed, what are the criteria for children's participation in decision-making processes at home, school, and child council, NGO or at national level?		FGD; Semi-structured interview; Peer Conversation	
	3. Who sets the criteria for children's participation in each institution?			
	4. Who selects the child participants?			

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
	5. What are the selection processes for children to participate in decisions at home, school, and child council or at national level?			
5. What is meant by children's participation in decision-making processes?	1. What do you mean by your participation in decision-making process?	1. Is there any difference between participation and expression of opinion? If so, what are those?	Semi-structured interview; FGDs;	Meaning of the idea of children's participation; Deconstructing the concept of children's participation. Cultural construction of the term "children's participation".
	2. When do you think that you should have a say on decisions about you?	2. At what age do you think you should have a say on decisions about you?		Influence of factors such as age, skills in children's ability to participate.
	3. Does your ability to participate depend on certain skills?	3. What sorts of skills or capacity do you need to participate?		

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
6. Do children want to participate in decision-making processes?	1. What do you think are the most important issues in your life?		Semi-structured Interview; FGD; Charts	Types of issues that children consider to be the most important issues in their lives; Types of issues where children can currently participate in decisions; Types of issues where children wish to participate; Types of issues that children do not want to contribute to; Children's account of why they wish to participate in certain issues? Children's account of why they don't want to participate in certain issues?
	2. What are the issues that you usually participate in?			
	3. What are the issues that you wish to participate in?			
	4. Why do you wish to participate?			

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
	5. What are the issues that you do not want to participate in and think that those are exclusively adult's responsibilities? 6. Why do you think so?			
7. What are the factors that facilitate children's participation?	1. What makes it easy for you to participate in decisions concerning you?	1. Your participation depends on what factors?	FGD; Semi-structured interviews; Story telling; Diamond ranking; Resource mapping	Factors (in each institution and in common) that enable children to participate; Types of adult support needed such as: information, contacts, association, space, resources, favourable attitude towards children's capacity, favourable sociocultural attitude and atmosphere; Attitude towards children's position in the society; Children's own capacity in terms of skills, ability, knowledge and awareness.

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
		2. When are you able to easily participate in decisions about you?		
		3. Do you think that your opportunity to participate in decisions about you changes as you grow older? If so, how? In which institutions? 4. What do you think are the most and least favourable factors for you to express your opinion?		Whether age is a marker for participation; Types of the most and least favourable factors for children's participation.

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
8. What are the factors that obstruct children's participation?	1. What makes it hard/difficult for you to participate in decisions concerning you? 2. Why don't adults listen to you? 3. Why don't girls and boys have an equal say? Or Does your opportunity and scope for participation vary between girls and boys? Or What restricts girls from equal participation in decision-making process? 4. What are the other reasons that restrict some children from participating in decisions? 6. What are the major and minor barriers to you (boys and girls separately)		FGD; Semi-structured interviews; Story telling; Drawing; Problem tree; Diamond ranking.	Factors (in each institution and in common) that obstruct children from participating. These may include factors caused by adults as well as any limitation of children themselves, if any; Identification of the various formal and informal rules, regulations, laws, values, customs, attitude, internalised norms or stereotypes and traditions that undermine children's participation in decision-making processes; Whether any differences in terms of gender, generation, class, ability and ethnicity influences children's access to and level of participation in various decision making processes about them; Attitude towards children's position in the society; The major and minor obstacles to children's participation. Causes of children's powerlessness in the society.

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
	participating in decisions concerning you?			
9. What is good about children's participation?	1. What is good about participating in decisions concerning you? 2. Could you tell me about your experiences of any occasions when you have expressed your opinion? 3. What helped you to express your opinion?		Semi-structured interview; FGD; Story telling; Worksheet	Children's own account of the positive aspects of participation; Factors that facilitate participation.
10. What is negative about children's participation?	1. What is negative about participating in decisions concerning you?			

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
	2. Do you have any experiences of participation that you did not like? 3. Why did not you like that? 4. Did you share that experience with anyone? If not, why? 5. Did you get any support for that? If so, what kind and from whom?		Semi-structured interview; FGD; Story telling; Worksheet	Children's own account of the negative aspects of participation; Factors that obstruct participation. Types of support children need to participate.
11. What is the significance of being involved in an organisation/ a formal structure to promote children's participation?	1. How does your involvement with an organisation/ the Child Council make it easy for you to participate in decisions about you? Or What is good about being involved in the		Semi-structured interview; FGD; Chart.	How much involvement of an organisation/formal structure facilitates children's participation. Limitation of being involved in a formal structure. Areas for improvement to facilitate participation.

Main Research Questions	Detailed Questions for Children	Breakdown/ Specific Questions for Children	Methods for Data Collection	Expected Data to be Collected
	organisation/ the Child Council?			
	4. What is bad about being involved in an organisation/ the Child Councils? 5. What can be done to improve the Chi Councils so that you have greater access to participation in decisions about you?			
12. What can be done to facilitate children's participation in decision-making processes?	1. What else can be done so that you and other children can easily participate in decisions about you at family, school, Child Council, NGO and at national level?	1. What can be done by adults so that you have greater opportunity to express your opinion? 2. What can be done by children so that they can easily express themselves?	Semi-structured interview; FGD; Worksheet	Possible suggestions to facilitate and enhance children's participation.

Annex 2 Interview guide for adults

1. How do you define a child and childhood?
2. What do you think about the idea of children's participation in decision-making processes?
3. When do you think children should have a say in decision-making processes?
4. How are decisions made about children?
5. What do you think are the factors that inhibit children to participate in decision-making processes?
6. What do you think are the factors that enable children to participate in decision-making processes?
7. What do you think about the importance of children's involvement in any formal structure such as the Child Councils to enable them to participate?

Main Questions	Detailed and Specific Questions	Methods for data collection	Expected data to be collected
1. How do you define a child and childhood?	1. What do you mean by the word child? 2. What determines childhood? 3. What is the age or age range used to define a child and childhood? 4. What are the various criteria related to physical growth, cognitive development, social experience and other issues used to define a child and childhood? 5. Is there any difference for definition between girls and boys? If so, why and what are those?	Semi-structured interview, FGD, Chart, Worksheet.	• Local construction of the child and childhood; • Determinants of the specific construction of a child and childhood; • Any difference in terms of gender.
2. What do you think about the idea of children participating in decision-making processes?	1. What do you think about children's rights? 2. How do you define children's participation? 3. Do you think children's participation in decision-making processes is an issue? If so, why? 4. Is there any difference between children and adult's participation? If so, what are those?	Semi-structured interview, FGD, Chart, Worksheet.	• Adult's knowledge and attitude about children's rights; • Local construction of children's participation; • Adult attitude towards children's participation in decision-making; • Issues that make children's participation different from adult's; • Measures that enable children to participate;

Main Questions	Detailed and Specific Questions	Methods for data collection	Expected data to be collected
	5. How can difference be addressed and what needs to be done to help children participate? 6. Do you think that children should not participate before a certain age? If so, why and what is that minimum age? 7. Can girls and boys equally participate? If not why and how? 8. What are the other factors that do not support children's participation?		• Attitude towards children's capacity; • Minimum age for participation and reasons; • Factors that obstruct children's participation such as: gender, generation, capacity and others.
3. When do you think children should participate in decision-making processes?	1. What sorts of decisions are made about children in various institutions? 2. What are the issues that you think children should participate in? 3. What do you think about children's capacity to participate? 4. When do you think children are able to participate in decision-making? 5. What do children need in order to participate?	Semi-structured interview, FGD, Chart, Worksheet.	• Types of decisions that are made about children in each institution; • Adult's attitude towards children's participation; • Types of issues that adults think children should participate in; • Attitude towards children's capacity to participate; • Resources (skills, capacity, support) children need to participate;

Main Questions	Detailed and Specific Questions	Methods for data collection	Expected data to be collected
			• Whether participation is linked to age or any other variables;
4. How are decisions made concerning children?	1. Who makes decisions about children (in each institution)? 2. How much do children participate in decision-making (in each institution)? 3. How do you make decisions about children? 4. What are the criteria for involving children in decision-making, when allowed, and how are they involved (at various institutional levels)?	Semi-structured interview, FGD, Chart, Worksheet.	• Key decision-makers and power holders in children's lives in each institution; • Attitude towards children's participation; • Processes of children's participation; • Stages of participation; agenda setting to policy influencing; representation.
5. What do you think are the factors that inhibit children from participating in decision-making processes?	1. What makes it difficult for children to participate in decision-making? 2. What are the assumptions and practices that do not support the consideration of children's perspective? 3. What is your opinion about why children should not participate?	Semi-structured interview, FGD, Chart, Worksheet.	• Adult's attitude towards children' s participation and children's capacity to participate; • Factors that obstruct children's participation; • Gender, generation, capacity/ability and other factors as determinants to participation.

Main Questions	Detailed and Specific Questions	Methods for data collection	Expected data to be collected
	4. How do you justify that children do not need to be involved in adult's decision-making processes? 5. If children did participate, what would happen? 6. Can girls and boys equally participate? If not, why?		
6. What do you think are the factors that enable children to participate in decision-making processes?	1. What makes it easy for children to participate in decision-making processes? 2. What are the assumptions and practices that support children's perspective to be considered? 3. What is your opinion about whether children should participate indecision-making? 4. How can children participate meaningfully? 5. What can you do to support children's participation? 6. What should be the adult's role and responsibility to support children's participation?	Semi-structured interview, FGD, Chart, Worksheet.	• Adult's attitude towards children's participation and children's capacity to participate; • Factors that enable children to participate; • Suggestions to enable children's participation.

Main Questions	Detailed and Specific Questions	Methods for data collection	Expected data to be collected
7. What do you think about the importance of children's involvement with any formal structure such as the Child Councils to enable them to participate?	1. What is good about the Child Council? 2. What is not good about the Child Council? 3. Do children necessarily need to be involved in any formal structure such as the Child Council to participate in decision-making processes? 4. If yes, why do you think so? 5. If not, why not? 6. What could be the alternative mechanisms for children participating in decision-making processes?		• Advantages as well as disadvantages if any, of being involved in a formal structure; • Disadvantages of non-involvement in any formal structure; • Strengths of formal structures; • Weaknesses of formal structure; • Suggestions that could enable children to participate.

Annex 3 ***Participation matrix***

Types of decisions made about children and young people	Who make(s) the decisions?	Insert ***to the most important; **to the medium important; *to the least important decisions in your life	Tick (√) if you can express your opinion.	Insert (x) if you want but cannot express your opinion.	Insert (○) if you do not want to express your opinion and think that it is exclusively the adult's responsibility

Annex 4 Attitude survey form for children and young people (open ended questions)

Name: Anonymous:

Age (or year of birth): Date:

Female: Male:

Occupation: Organisation:

Please complete the following sentences in your own words that first come to your mind.

1. Children means .....
2. Children have rights to .....
3. Children's participation means .....
4. Children are able to participate at the age of .....
5. Children are able to participate when .....
6. Children are not able to participate when .....
7. Children should .....
8. Children should not .....
9. Adults' have responsibility to .....
10. Children's capacity to participate depends on .....
11. Children should participate in .....
12. Children should be able to participate because .....
13. Children should not participate in .....
14. Children should not participate because .....
15. Adults should .....
16. Adults should not .....
17. Children's perspective is .....
18. Children's participation may lead to .....
19. Children do not need to participate because .....
20. Children's participation is successful when .....
21. Children's participation is unsuccessful when .....
22. Positive aspects of children's participation are .....
23. Negative aspects of children's participation are .....

Annex 5 Attitude survey form for adult (open ended questions)

Name: Anonymous:

Age (or year of birth): Date:

Female: Male:

Occupation: Organisation:

Please complete the following sentences in your own words that first come to your mind.

1. Children means .....
2. Children have rights to .....
3. Children's participation means .....
4. Children are able to participate at the age of .....
5. Children are able to participate when .....
6. Children are not able to participate when .....
7. Children should .....
8. Children should not .....
9. Adults' have responsibility to .....
10. Children's capacity to participate depends on .....
11. Children should participate in .....
12. Children should be able to participate because .....
13. Children should not participate in .....
14. Children should not participate because .....
15. Adults should .....
16. Adults should not .....
17. Children's perspective is .....
18. Children's participation may lead to .....
19. Children do not need to participate because .....
20. Children's participation is successful when .....
21. Children's participation is unsuccessful when .....
22. Positive aspects of children's participation are .....
23. Negative aspects of children's participation are .....

Annex 6 Attitude survey form for children and young people (Likert questions)

Name: Anonymous:

Age or year of birth: Date:

Female: Male:

School: Organisation:

Please read the following statements and tick (√) the response that you think is the most closest to your opinion.

1. Children should always have the opportunity to participate in decisions about them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

2. Children below the age of eleven years are not able to express their views properly.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

3. Children need adult's support to participate in decisions about them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

4. I do not understand what children's participation means.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

5. Children do not have the capacity to participate effectively on decisions about their life.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

6. Children need to develop skills to participate effectively.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

7. If children are allowed to participate in decisions with adults, they will become disobedient.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

8. Adults know what is best for children. Therefore, adults do not need to ask children's opinion on decisions about them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

9. It is difficult for children to participate in adult decision-making forums.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

10. Sometimes it is hard for me to express and articulate what I think.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

11. Children are not asked to give their opinion on decision-making concerning them in family/school/community.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

12. I would like to get better access to decision-making processes concerning me at family/schools/community/national levels.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

13. Participation in decision-making is not a burden for me.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

14. Participation is easier for a boy than a girl.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

15. I would like to participate on certain issues but not on every issue about my life.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

16. Children need to be involved with structures such as the Child Councils so that they can participate easily.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

17. Adults think that children are not capable of participating effectively in decision-making.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

18. Adult's need to be sensitised so that they allow children to participate in decisions.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

19. Adult's attitude is the greatest barrier to children's participation.

Agree	Partially Agree	Not Sure	Disagree

Annex 7 Attitude survey form for adults (Likert questions)

Name:	Date:
Age:	Village:
Male/Female:	Sub-district
Education:	Economic status: Middle/Upper/Lower
Profession:	No. of children below 18 years:
Organisation:	Girl: Boy

Please read the following statements and tick (√) the response that you think is the most closest to your opinion.

1. Children do not have the capacity to participate in difficult process such as decision making and policy planning.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

2. Children below the age of 11 years cannot express their views properly in decision making.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

3. It is not well understood what is meant by children's participation.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

4. Children should be given opportunities to participate in decision making affecting their lives.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

5. A child can participate in decision making when he/she is no longer considered to be a child.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

6. Children's capacities need to be enhanced in order to participate in decision making.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

7. Children need adult support to participate in decision making.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

8. It is difficult for children to express their views when adults make decisions about them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

Attitude survey form for adults (Likert questions)

9. Parents know children's best interests.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

10. Since parents know children's best interests, it is parents' duty to make decisions; there is no need to ask for children's perspectives.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

11. There is no reason that children's perspective will necessarily result in good decision.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

12. It is an extra burden to ensure children's participation in decision-making about them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

13. If children start expressing opinions to adults in making decisions, adults may think that children will become discourteous.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

14. It is not necessary to consult children in decision-making affecting them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

15. Children's perspectives should be sought in decision-making at home

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

16. Students' perspectives should be sought in decision-making at school

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

17. Children's perspectives should be sought in policy planning for processes for children's development.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

18. Children's participation depends on children's knowledge, understanding and experience on the issue.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

19. Children's current interests can be ignored when considering their future benefits.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

Attitude survey form for adults (Likert questions)

20. Children with disabilities do not have the capacity to express their views in decisions affecting them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

21. Children from various ethnic minorities have less access to participate in decision-making affecting them.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

22. It is comparatively difficult for girls than boys to express their views in decision-making at home.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

23. It is relatively easier for boys than for girls to participate in decision-making at school.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

24. Children can benefit when decisions are made by taking their perspective into account.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

25. Adults' understanding about what children can do and cannot do is the most significant barrier to children's participation in decision making.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

26. Adults need to be sensitised so that they consult children in decision-making.

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

27. Children need to be involved with formal structures such as Children's Councils to express their views in decision making at every level (family, school, community, government).

Agree	Partially Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

Annex 8 Institutional survey form

Institutional status of children and young people's participation in decision-making that concerns them

Name of the Organization:

Respondent:

Position of the Respondent:

Date:

1.	Does your organisation have any written policy that demands mandatory children's participation in decision-making? If yes, please attach a copy of the policy.	Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments
2.	Does your organisation have any written policy/guidelines which demand children's participation in decision-making when **planning/designing** children's projects? If yes, please attach a copy of the policy.	Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments
3.	Does your organisation have any written policy/guidelines that demand mandatory children's participation in decision-making in the process of **implementing** the projects? If yes, please attach a copy of the policy.	Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments
4.	Does your organisation have any written policy/guideline that demands mandatory children's participation in decision-making during the process of **monitoring** the projects? If yes, please attach a copy of the policy.	Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments
5.	Does your organisation have any written policy/guideline, which demands mandatory children's participation in decision-making in the process of **evaluating** the projects? If yes, please attach a copy of the policy.	Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments

6.	Does your organisation have any specific types of works/interventions/services that target promoting children's participation in decision-making that concerns them?		Yes	No	If yes, please mention/explain them.	Comments
7.	If yes for any of the questions above, what age groups of children, participate in decision-making, in your organisation? (please put tick in the age group)	5-9 yrs	10-14 yrs	15-18 yrs	Please explain the reasons if any of the three groups are not included.	Please explain the reasons if any of the three groups are mostly involved.
8.	(For any 'Yes' answers to the questions above) Is there any special strategy in the policy documents/guidelines to attract girls' participation in decision-making at the levels stated above?		Yes	No	If yes, please mention/explain the special strategies.	Comments
9.	Does your organization make sure that all of its staff are sensitive to children's participation in decisions that concerns them?		Yes	No	If yes, please explain how. / If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments
10.	Do you think that your organization has sufficient staff and skills to facilitate the participation of its target children in the decision-making processes that concern them?		Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	Comments
11.	Do you think your organization is capable and positioned to influence policy making in Bangladesh in order to bring about necessary institutional reform for children's participation in decision-making that concerns them?		Yes	No	If not, please explain the reasons.	If yes, please explain your organisation's potential to do it.

12.	Do you think any conceptual disagreement exists among different organisations working in children's participation issues that somehow obstructs the process of institutionalizing children's participation in decision-making in Bangladesh?	Yes	No	If yes, please explain the reasons.	Comments
13.	Please identify/explain six factors that **constrain** children's participation in decision-making that concerns them in **your organisation** (from the most important to the least).				Comments/any other factors.
14.	Please identify/explain six factors that **constrain** children's participation in decision-making on issues concerning their **schooling** (from the most significant to the least).				Comments/any other factors
15.	Please identify/explain six factors that **constrain** children's participation in decision-making, on issues concerning them, in government **public policies and services** (from the most significant to the least).				Comment/any other factors
16.	Please identify/explain six factors that **facilitate** children's participation in decision-making, on issues concerning them, in your organisation (from the most significant to the least).				Comments/any other factors
17.	Please identify/explain six **suggestions** to **promote/institutionalize** children's participation in decision-making in your organisation and projects (from the most significant to the least).				Comments/any other suggestions
18.	Please identify/explain six **suggestions** to **promote/institutionalize** children's participation in decision-making in school (from the most significant to the least).				Comments/any other suggestions
19.	Please identify/explain six **suggestions** to **promote/institutionalize** children's participation in decision-making in government policies and services (from the most significant to the least).				Comments/any other suggestions

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